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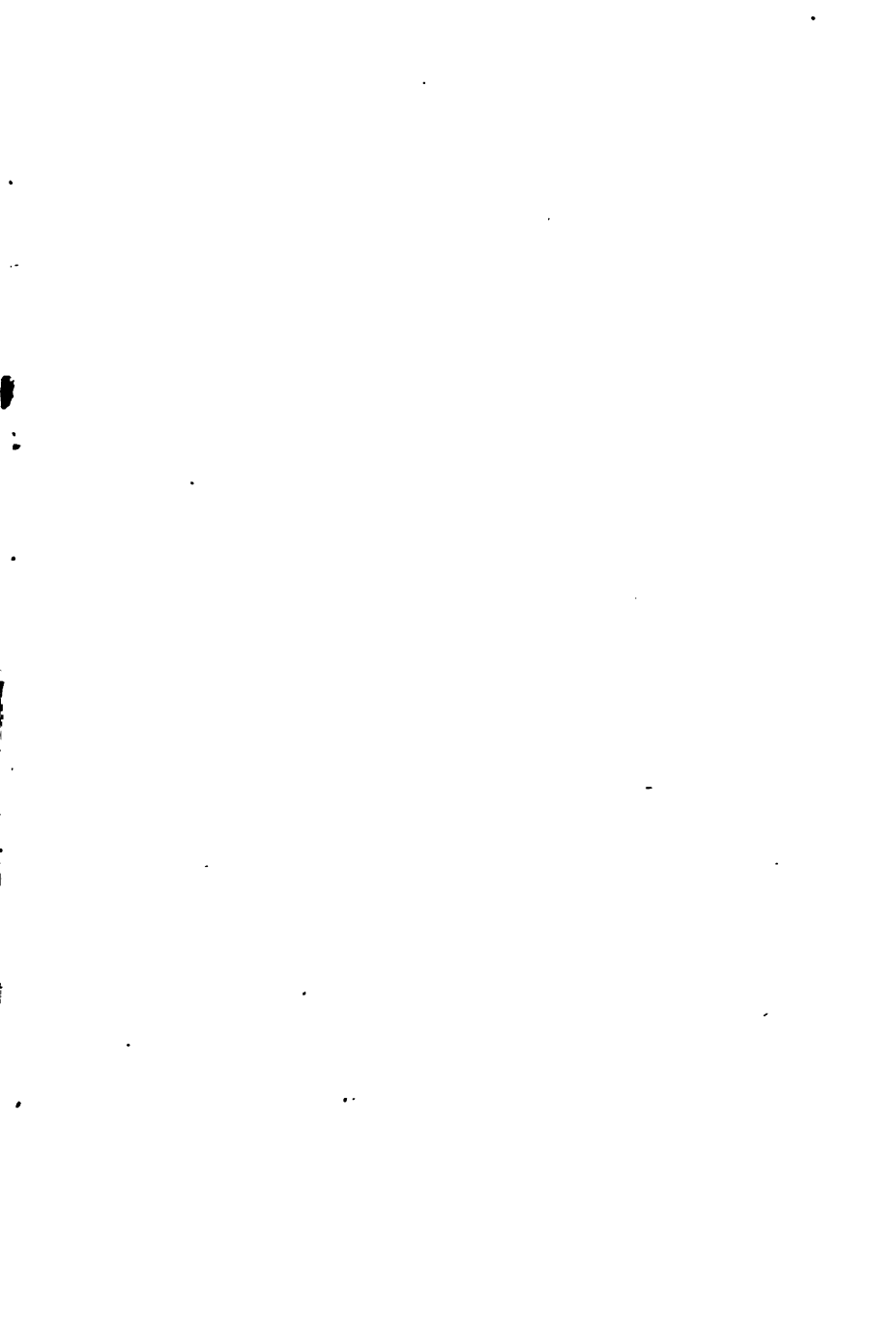
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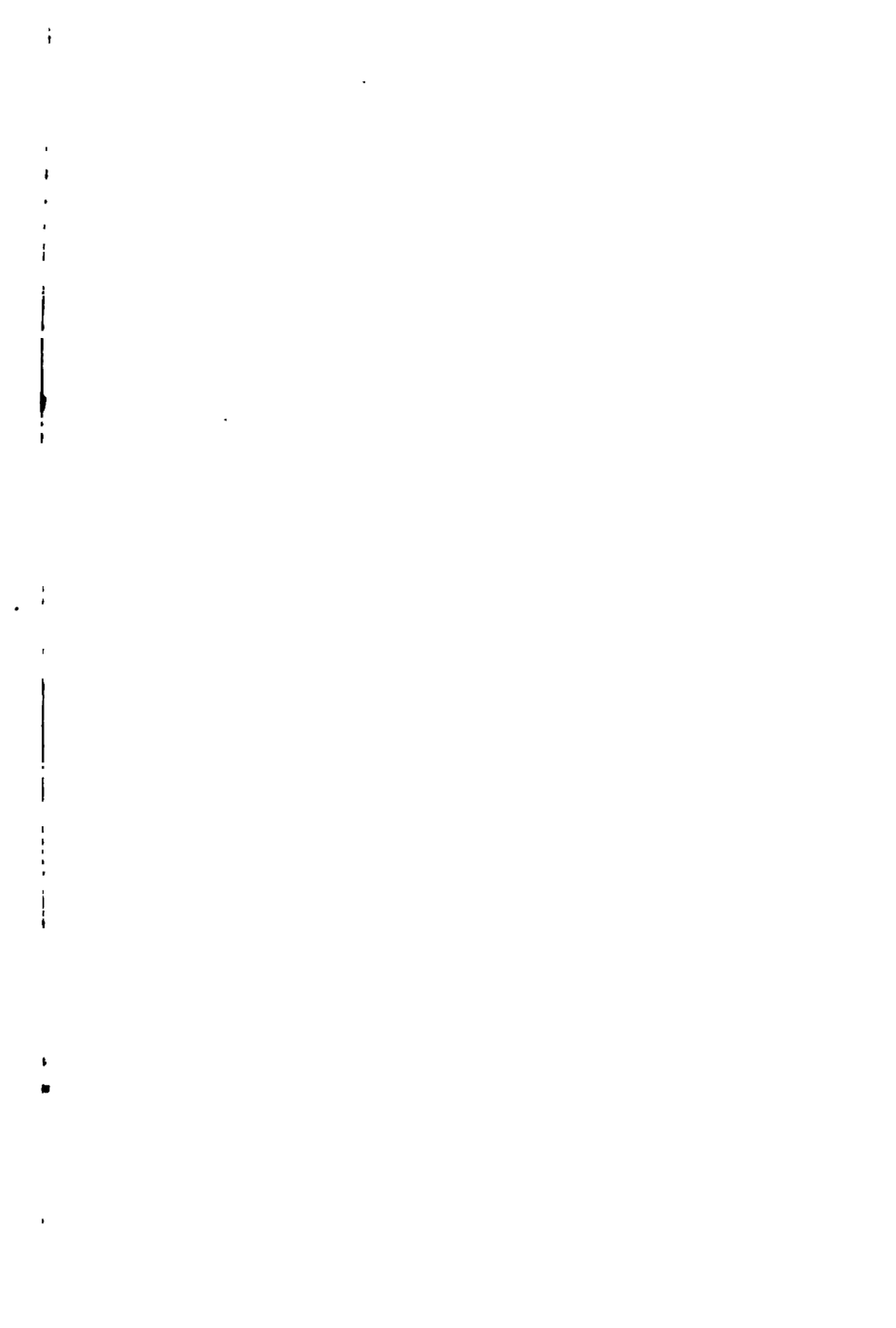


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DANTE'S  
DIVINA COMMEDIA:

*ITS SCOPE AND VALUE.*

*FROM THE GERMAN OF*  
FRANZ HETTINGER, D.D.,  
PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY  
OF WURZBURG.

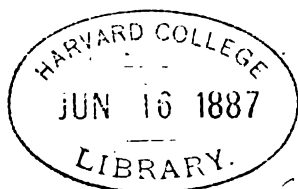
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## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

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"THE scope and value of the *Divina Commedia*" is not a subject which interests merely the student of classic poetry, mediæval history, or the Italian tongue. In the present, even more than in the past, the poem holds its place, apart from its artistic merit, as a profound and comprehensive treatise on the principles of human conduct, and the end and worth of life. Most diverse, however, are the interpretations it receives. Writers, politicians, and statesmen of the foreign "liberal" school see in its pages the first expression and the strongest defence of their theories; while, on the other hand, theologians, religious, and bishops are among the most strenuous defenders of its orthodoxy. At Florence, in 1865, young Italy crowns the bust of the poet as the herald of free thought and revolution; at Ravenna, in 1857, Pius IX. places a wreath on his tomb, as a witness to his Catholic loyalty and faith. What then is the true teaching of the *Commedia*, and whence arise these conflicting judgments? Dr. Hettinger seeks for a reply by a method comparatively little used. He takes the poet's own teachers, the Fathers and Schoolmen, as his guides, and shows, from their writings, the source, as he thinks, of Dante's song, and therewith its true interpretation. For this mode of exposition Dr. Hettinger is eminently fitted. His great work, the *Apologie des Christenthums*, of which translations

are to be found in nearly every European language, has long since secured him a position in the front rank of Catholic theologians. At the same time he is thoroughly conversant with the modern literature bearing on the *Commedia*.

Of the result of his inquiry we will trace a brief outline. The subject-matter of the poem is the redemption of sinful man, and his ascent, by grace and repentance, from earth to heaven. Hell puts before us the sinner obdurate and chastised; Purgatory the penitent absolved, and advancing in virtue; Paradise the summit gained, and the reward of those who persevere. The idea in its development embraces the whole circle of Catholic theology, demonstrated according to the scholastic method of Dante's time, but expressed in form and language solely his own. Reason and faith, freewill and grace, the State and the Church, and their mutual relations—the three kingdoms of nature, grace, and glory, and each in detail—man, sinning, repentant, and triumphant—all these fall within the range of the poet's vision. What that vision shows he recounts and describes as it is seen. In his own complex being, in the problems of the schools and of theology, in the world visible and invisible, mysteries deep and unfathomable arrest his thought; but he rejects as puerile and unworthy any temptation to doubt; where reason fails, he believes and adores. Nay, the very fact that God is incomprehensible, that His decrees and works are alike inscrutable, is to him a cause not of despondency but of thanksgiving. He delights to prostrate himself, in his ignorance and nothingness, before his Creator, all wise and all perfect, and then by a single act of love to span the infinite and be one with his God.

And in the same spirit of exultant faith he views all things. Hell with its eternal torture, the stumbling-block of the modern philosopher, is to him a creation, not only

of "divine power and supremest wisdom," but also of "primeval love." For by Hell, even with the rebel and the impenitent, that order is preserved which it is the office of love to guard, and which makes the universe resemble God. Apart from God and His grace, natural gifts and merits are worthless. The most eminent patriots and statesmen are for one mortal sin cast into Hell; while by one act of contrition, "*una lagrimetta*,"<sup>1</sup> one poor tear, with the name of Mary on the lips of the dying criminal, and Heaven is won. That Heaven is open to all. The pagan who has never heard of Christ, if he obey the natural law, and place all his love in what is just and right, will receive from God further grace, and faith sufficient for salvation. But faith is absolutely necessary, and formal heresy and infidelity are the worst wilful sins, and can never be excused. They come from a desire to measure divine by human justice; from an obstinate and unreasonable attachment to our own opinions; a restless eagerness to shine, love of singularity; private and warped interpretation of Holy Writ, and carnal sins which necessarily obscure the "light that cometh from above."

Though the poet knows no guide but the Church and her teachers, he by no means disparages reason, which is of our nature "the mitre and the crown."<sup>2</sup> Innate and unquenchable is man's thirst for truth, and therefore Dante studied philosophy as the first of human sciences, and constantly introduces philosophical arguments and discussions. He has indeed been criticised for thus encumbering his theme with useless and wearisome digressions, but the nature of his subject and the thought of his time alike demanded the employment of such arguments; while the power with which he has moulded tough scholastic terms to poetic forms, without detriment to their force, offers a

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* v. 107, 101.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* xxvii. 142.

striking proof of his genius. But further, to our mind, the philosophical element in the poem is most valuable for itself. Hallam did not hesitate to say, some forty years since, that Dr. Hampden was "the only Englishman, past or present, who had penetrated far into the wilderness of scholasticism."<sup>1</sup> This is so no longer. Disputants of all schools, who profess to treat of Christian philosophy, read and quote the *Summa*. Men are learning again, that whatever the ignorance of the mediæval schools in physical science, the scholastic system is unrivalled for clearness of thought, accuracy of expression, and cogency of reasoning; for "that fitting and close coherence of effects and causes, drawn up like soldiers in line of battle; those lucid definitions and distinctions, by which light is distinguished from darkness, truth from falsehood."<sup>2</sup> These intellectual forces, and this system of teaching, are seen in Dante as "marshalled by their chief and master St. Thomas, who sat in the great houses of human wisdom like a prince in his kingdom."<sup>3</sup> It is surely then a merit in the poem that it brings us into contact with a mind whose "matchless grasp and subtlety of intellect seem almost without a parallel,"<sup>4</sup> and with that system of philosophy which alone seems to beget conviction, and to have a close and prescriptive alliance with the teachings of faith.

But again, man acquires information and truth through intercourse with others. Left to himself he would make no progress; human society is necessary for his development, and has been so willed by God. The welfare and stability of this society, the true principles of its laws and government, become therefore an all important question,

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, *Literature of Europe*, v. 1., p. 14, ed. 1854.

<sup>2</sup> Sixt. V. *Bulla Triumphantis*. Leo. XIII. *Encyc.*, August 4, 1879.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Prof. Huxley, *Fortnightly Review*, p. 300, vol. ccl., N. S., December, 1886.

and politics fall necessarily within the scheme of the *Divina Commedia*. Of all forms of government, Dante, who follows as usual Aristotle and St. Thomas, prefers an empire; both because the rule of one absolute monarch, with universal authority, is best calculated to secure that stable peace which is necessary for the wellbeing of human society, and also because it most resembles, in its catholicity and union, that Divine unity which marks the Creator's works, and society thus governed becomes a likeness of Heaven. But Dante's ideal emperor is no selfish oppressor. He is to seek not his own but his subjects' good; he is to rule so that men may be free, and freedom means a state in which every man can become good. Those who use their sovereignty otherwise are tyrants, and are classed with murderers in Hell. On the other hand, the duties of subjects are urgently insisted on. As the authority of the ruler is from above, the rebel who conspires against king or country is second only in malice to the heretic who revolts against his God; and Brutus and Cassius share with Judas the lowest depth of the abyss.

If then in politics, philosophy, and theology, Dante is so essentially catholic and orthodox, how is he claimed as the advocate of scepticism and revolution? The poet was not a saint, but a fallible and erring man. Pride and hate were, as he says himself, his two chief faults; and Dr. Hettinger has no wish to paint him aught but what he is. His exile, together with that of other Ghibelline chiefs; the confiscation of his goods, and subsequent expatriation of his family, by Charles of Valois and his knights, while Dante himself was absent on an embassy to Rome, embittered him for ever against the French party in Italy, and especially against Boniface VIII., under whose authority the French at that time professed to act. But to a proud nature like the poet's, personal resentment

would be but a poor excuse for the violent invectives he employs; and he eagerly adopted a theory of politics, which both harmonised with his wounded feelings and served as a vehicle for their expression. The German emperor, whose authority he regards as of divine origin, was then the one powerful opponent both of the French king and of the sovereign Pontiff; and in him Dante sees the saviour of Italy, and in his universal empire the salvation of mankind. He admits, indeed, the supremacy and independence of the Church, and the necessary subordination of the temporal to the spiritual power, but would have the Church confine her authority and dominion to spiritual things only; and denounces the gift of Constantine—by which, according to him, the Pope first became possessed of temporalities—as the curse of the Church and the source of its decay. It is then as a patriot and a prophet, in defence of his country and in behalf of the Church's purity, that Dante launches his fiercest diatribes against Papal greed and tyranny. In fact and theory he was, as Dr. Hettinger points out, equally at fault. The Holy Roman Empire owed its title, not to Divine institution, but to the Pope, who alone conferred on Charlemagne and his successors the imperial prerogatives under certain definite obligations, which the monarch was to perform to the Church and to his own subjects. When, then, the Emperor oppressed alike his people and the Church, the Pope, who had become by common consent and the course of events the recognised arbitrator of Christian Europe, was forced by every right to resist his encroachments. Had he not done so, had Gregory IX. or Innocent IV. allowed Frederic to proceed unchecked, a despotism worse than Oriental would have enslaved Europe, priests and people alike. But Dante lived to see his wishes carried out. Clement V. withdrew from Rome, and placed

the Holy See under the tutelage of France, with what result in Dante's eyes? Why, that the Church in her secular aspect was robbed of her freedom, dignity, and purity, and became like a mere state establishment, "una puttana sciolta."<sup>1</sup> Dante's teaching, then, as regards the empire was radically unsound, and as he embodied it in the *De Monarchia*, that book was placed on the *Index* as a work which would be dangerous in the hands of the enemies of the Church. The event has proved the justice of that decree. From Dante's theory, that the Church's dominion is purely spiritual, Marsilius, Huss, and Wickliff, with logical deduction, proclaimed her incapable of possessing property, and consequently plundered her goods. But the decree of the Holy Office, as Dr. Hettinger shows, does not condemn the author as a teacher of heresy, nor is it even a censure. The prohibition regards, moreover, only the work named, and therefore, in this instance, in no way affects the *Commedia*. It is well that Dr. Hettinger has brought out this point, for in Dean Church's *Essay*,<sup>2</sup> deservedly the most widely read work on Dante in this country, it is stated that the poet has been both claimed and condemned as the disturber of the faith, and has had hard measure dealt him by the Church who is so much beholden to him. With regard to this second point, let us first ask how Dante dealt with the Church and her rulers? How far were his attacks upon the Popes justified? They might have committed simony and been cruel tyrants. There is no guarantee in the Divine promise against such lapses. The question is merely one of history, not doctrine. Were they what he describes? We will take briefly three prominent cases.

First, Nicholas III., surnamed "Il Composto" from his habitual recollection. During the three short years of his

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* xxxii. 149.

<sup>2</sup> Pages 120, 122, ed. 1879.



pontificate, he compelled both the Emperor Rudolph and Charles of Anjou to abandon their claims on the Holy See, laboured strenuously and with success for the reunion of the Greeks, and was the special protector of the Franciscan order. Ambitious views for the exaltation of his family is the only kind of reproach on his character; yet Dante condemns him to Hell, on "the unproved and improbable accusation of simony."<sup>1</sup> Secondly, St. Celestine V., "a man of admirable simplicity, but unfitted for the affairs connected with the government of the Church,"<sup>2</sup> renounced the pontificate, which he felt was beyond his power. He was clearly within his rights in so doing, and the disinterestedness of his conduct is praised by Petrarch as the act rather of an angel than of a man. Yet, solely for this act, Dante classes him among the reprobates, with the sluggards and base-minded souls. Thirdly, the chief object of his hate is Boniface VIII., whom he anathematizes no less than nine times on charges chiefly of simony and cruelty. We have already seen why the poet considered this Pope the author of his life's wrongs. The history of his election, which Dante describes as fraudulent, is simple enough. The electing cardinals were twenty-two in number, and unanimously chose the most eminent and independent of their colleagues to the vacant See. Humanly speaking, it was against their interest to elect Boniface, for he would inevitably come into conflict with the French monarch, to whose party most of the College belonged; but, as so often happened, they chose not for their own interests, but for that of the Church.

Again, Dante accuses him, in common with Guido da Montefeltro, of the treacherous destruction of the fortress of Palestrina. The story is rejected as a calumny by

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Döllinger, *History of the Church*, vol. iv. 75.

<sup>2</sup> *Bulla canoniz. Sti Petri Celest.*

Muratori and by all the most trustworthy authorities. Guido was a celebrated general, who became a Franciscan friar. He was therefore one of the conspicuous men of his age, and his doings are duly noted in the contemporary records of his Order, and of the city of Bologna; neither makes any allusion to his having returned to the world, but both testify to his having lived and died a holy religious. Dante himself, in the *Convito* (iv. 28), speaks of Guido as one of those noble souls, who, when advanced in age, put aside every worldly occupation and affection, to enter religion. But these and other equally scandalous charges were fully disposed of at the Council of Vienne in 1312. Boniface died in 1303. For the eight following years, his enemies, the Colonnas and the French kings, had pressed for proceedings to be instituted against his name, and thus had ample time to prepare their charges, with proofs in support. Yet by the decree of that Council, in the face of every hostile influence, ecclesiastical and civil, he was duly acknowledged as Pope, and his character cleared from the slightest imputation. He may have been inflexible and stern, nay severe, but during his long pontificate he never took the life of a single foe, and in those times severity was needed. Within the ranks of the clergy were devout but eccentric enthusiasts like B. Jacopone, or pious but simple recluses like St. Celestine, who might at any time become the tools of a dangerous faction. With the secular powers, especially France, his life was one long conflict for that supreme spiritual dominion which had ever been regarded as the Church's right.<sup>1</sup> His own words, when he stood as it were alone against the princes of earth, will best explain the motive of his conduct, and the persecution which pursued him in life and death. "If all the princes of the world were united against us, we should

<sup>1</sup> See page 395 in the following essay.

regard them as straws, if truth were on our side, and we were responsible for it. But were truth and justice not with us, then indeed we should have reason for fear."<sup>1</sup>

We think then that if reliable authorities be consulted<sup>2</sup> it would be found that Dante has assailed with calumnies some of the Church's holiest rulers, and has met with singular leniency in return. When we recall the "Index of Prohibited Works," published by Act of Parliament in this country from the Reformation downwards, because they reflected on the character of the reigning sovereign, or on their conduct with regard to religion, books which it was made high treason to possess, we think the Holy See's treatment of the poet is that of a wise and generous parent, who will not allow the storm of passion in an erring child to influence her recognition and approval of his truer and better nature. And thus as the *Divina Commedia*, notwithstanding these serious blots, remains substantially a magnificent exposition of the Catholic faith, it has been studied and extolled by theologians and popes.

There is one other character which finds a place in every commentary on Dante, and which must not be passed by unnoticed, the Emperor Frederic II., "Stupor mundi et immutator mirabilis."<sup>3</sup> He was the centre of the Ghibelline hopes, and the impersonation of the Ghibelline policy carried to its logical development. His kingdom included Burgundy, Germany, Italy, and Sicily. He had opportunities for good, such as perhaps no monarch enjoyed. How did he use them? According to Macaulay, he was "brave, accomplished, and unfortunate—a poet in the age of schoolmen, a philosopher in the age of monks, a states-

<sup>1</sup> Hergenröther, v. ii. p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> e.g., Mansi, Hefele, Döllinger, Hergenröther.

<sup>3</sup> Sic Matthew Paris, the panegyrist of Frederic, whom he also styles, "Principum mundi maximus." *Hist. major.* ed. Pelé, Paris, 1644. Cf. Freeman, *Hist. Essays*, v. 1, 281.

man in the age of the Crusades." First, as regards his fortitude, perhaps the most brilliant army ever despatched to Palestine, to which England alone contributed 60,000 men, was allowed by this "brave king" to sicken, disappear, and die, till only 800 knights were left. Frederic meanwhile lingered at home, violating day by day his pledged word to head the campaign. His philosophy, derived from the Arabian pantheistic corrupters of Aristotle, and from the horoscopes cast for him by the wizard astrologer, Michael Scot, consisted of a blind fatalism. Anything new he eagerly sought—the last new receipt for a dish, the last new book, the latest theory broached on God or the soul—and from whatever source, Jew, Greek, Mahometan, save only Christian. In this sense he was a promoter of learning, and "*immutator mirabilis*." A materialist in creed, he made sensuality a religion, and duly organised its worship. The high festivals were kept with all pomp "at his refined and enlightened court," as Dean Church even calls it. The ministers of the new religion were the harem of Saracen women, and troops of jugglers and clowns—its ritual, their dances, songs, and diverse performances, conducted amid scenes of fairy-like splendour. In the midst of these orgies, the whole aim of which was to protest against the Christian doctrine of self-denial, Frederic was adored on both knees as the supreme lord of earth. His sensuality was only equalled by his cruelty. He revenged a conspiracy in Sicily, after the manner of his father, upon women and children; tortured a Franciscan friar for being the bearer of a papal letter; and in 1241, put out the eyes of Pietro delle Vigne, his confidential minister and "right arm." An oft-convicted perjurer, he regarded deceit as a virtue, and practised it so perfectly, that he seems to have lost the power, not only of speaking the truth, but of discerning it in his own mind. His statesmanship ended in the

destruction of his family, the dire confusion of all things in Italy, and the proximate disruption of the Empire. His last act was to put on the Cistercian habit; but few believed in his conversion, and Dante records but the judgment of his contemporaries in giving him sepulture with the heresiarchs.<sup>1</sup>

Turning now to the artistic merit of the *Commedia*. The form in which the poet casts his matter offers most scope for the display of originality and genius. Visions of the other world had been frequently described in prose and verse before Dante wrote, and the same theme has been repeatedly treated since his death. The subject, therefore, is not new, but, as recast by Dante, is solely his own creation. His comparisons and illustrations, especially in the *Inferno*, are often of a kind distasteful to modern fastidiousness. But his object was truth. He knew that sin, and the flattering temptation which leads to it, however attractive or graceful the mask, are in reality hideous, revolting, and corrupt; and he therefore purposely selected what was most repellant in nature as its fitting image. And here again he but follows the example of the prophets in Holy Scripture and the Apostles, who compare the apostate and the sinner relapsed, to the "dog that returneth to his vomit," and "the sow that is washed, to her wallowing in the mire."<sup>2</sup> The characteristic excellences of the poem have been so often pointed out, that we will only follow our author in regard to some of the most striking. First, though the scene lies entirely in the other world, the reader meets, not typical forms or mythical personages,

<sup>1</sup> Our estimate of his character is drawn from Döllinger's *Church History*, vol. iv. English trans., and from Reuter's *Geschichte der religiösen Aufklärung im Mittelalter*, 1877, which includes the latest researches on the subject. Reuter does not betray sign of any definite religious belief, and is an admirer on the whole of Frederic.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. xxvi. 11; 2 Pet. ii. 22.

but human beings clothed and palpable, the poet's contemporaries or predecessors—his relations, friends, teachers, favourite authors, artists, sculptors, rulers, statesmen, warriors, priests, religious, prelates, who were known to him personally or by repute. Even when he is forced to employ a typical figure, as with the impersonation of Divine Wisdom, he chooses Beatrice, the pure and gentle maiden, his first and last earthly love, who, transformed and idealised, still leads him by the "cords of Adam" to God. Or when he is obliged to form a creature from his phantasy, as with the horrible figure of Lucifer, there appears no chimera, grotesque, and unimaginable, but a form, half beast, half man, which though monstrous, is so distinct and visible, that the poet seems to have felt and grasped, as Macaulay says, "the demon's shaggy sides." The effect of such treatment is, of course, dramatic in the highest degree. You are surrounded by a world, not of fiction, but of truth. Again, his descriptions of punishment, penance, and reward, are not arbitrarily chosen. The narrowing circles of Hell are drawn from the increasing degrees of malice in the sphere of evil, and the diverse tortures of the lost are theologically appropriate to the sins chastised. In *Purgatory*, where the relics of evil are effaced, the poet commences his ascent, with seven P's inscribed on his forehead, signifying the seven deadly sins; which are successively removed as he mounts from grade to grade, to the strains of the corresponding beatitudes, and of sweet angelic song. The structure of Heaven is determined by the nine orders of angels, as described by the Fathers and Schoolmen; and the joy of the Blessed varies with their fulness of the Vision of God. From Holy Scripture, from theology, from the revelations of the saints, Dante thus drew his most precious materials, and constantly employs the Church's liturgy and office as their

most fitting expression. To his faith, Dante owes this extraordinary graphic power, which no natural genius or learning could have supplied.

Nor is the influence of Catholicism on the poet confined to the supernatural. The *Divina Commedia* is marked, it has been observed, by its comprehensiveness and unity. The poet embraces all things in his gaze—political events, the movements of troops; the emotions of the soul in sickness and in health, in childhood and in age; the attitudes of the body at rest, work, and play;<sup>1</sup> birds and beasts, fishes and insects, doves cooing and circling, rooks moving at daylight, starlings in their flight, the falcon unhooded and tressed, the joy of the nightingale's song, the lark silent at last, satiate with its own sweetness; fish making for food thrown to them; bees gathering honey, poisoning and returning; sheep issuing from the fold; light in all its effects of colour and shade and brightness; nature in all her varying moods; the scenery he has met with in France, Germany, the Low Countries, above all, in his dear native land; all that he has read in history sacred or profane, or heard in legend and fable; all he has admired in music, painting, sculpture; all he has felt in his own stormy and chequered life—his hopes and fears, his joys and sufferings, in temptation, sin, and repentance—all these find their place in Dante's "terza rima;" each fills its own part, bears its own witness, and serves to intensify the force, harmony, and beauty of the whole poem.

Whence then has the poet this power? One system only teaches man that all things come from One, and to that One return, and that all are to help him to that one End. The lessons which our Lord taught from nature—from the flowers and wheat, the birds, sheep, fish, the tares

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Church, p. 141, *et passim*.

and the thorns, the vine, the fig, and the mustard, the seed-time and harvest, these the Church and the Church alone has ever taught. Nor is her teaching merely by rote. The lives of her children, from the fathers of the desert downwards, are replete with examples of the homage which the lower world pays to holiness, and of the strange sympathy and correspondence between even inanimate nature and grace. Never was this more fully illustrated than in the thirteenth century, which was so conspicuously an age of faith. Before Dante, and in his time, St. Francis and his companions,<sup>1</sup> notably the B. Jacopone, had already consecrated the new-born Italian tongue to the service of religion and faith; and it is nature and the visible world which inspires the Franciscan lyre. St. Francis, in his *Canticle of the Sun*, calls upon his brother the Sun, and the Wind; his sister the Moon, the Stars and the Water, "so humble, precious, and pure;" on his mother the Earth, who gives him food, and produces so many-coloured flowers and herbs—to each and all he appeals as his brethren in the vast choir of Nature to join their voices with his in praising God. The *Little Flowers of St. Francis* read like a response to his call. Flocks of birds assist in silence at his sermon, and the fishes at that of his disciple St. Antony. The vineyard, trampled down by the multitude of his followers, fructifies anew at his bidding; the wild wolf of Gubbio kneels at his feet, and the wood pigeons seek his blessing before they roost for the night. Wherever we turn, similar manifestations present themselves. The roses flowering in St. Elizabeth's mantle; the orange tree growing from St. Dominic's staff; the manna, and lilies with celestial perfume, which descend on St. Agnes at prayer; the fountain of healing water which bursts forth at her touch—all the wonders of Mount Senario; the miraculous fir tree

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ozanam, *Les Poètes Franciscains en Italie*.



with each bough a cross ; the vine which buds in February ; and the doves and lilies which salute the dying founder ; —all these, be they taken only as legends, testify to the current belief that the “stones do indeed cry out,” and the senseless earth, and irrational creation, bear witness to their God. Now doubtless Dante, wherever he had lived, would have been a poet of nature ; but to suppose that he opened men's eyes anew to the beauties of the visible world, or to its higher teaching, is a mistake. His age was already possessed of the richest store of natural imagery, which was at once most popular, most religious, and of amazing beauty. The materials, then, which he wanted were there ready and to hand. How far he used them we do not pretend to say. But if in the minds of those amidst whom he dwelt, and for whom he wrote, the waterfowl,<sup>1</sup> the doves,<sup>2</sup> the flowers,<sup>3</sup> the bees,<sup>4</sup> and the fish,<sup>5</sup> had already witnessed to the power of the saints in life and death, what more fitting images could be found to represent their transports in glory :

“La gloria di Colui che tutto muove  
Per l'universo penetra, e risplende  
In una parte più, e meno altrove.”—*Par. i. 1.*

Again, his historical knowledge, which sums up all that he had read of pagan as well as Christian heroes, bears the impress of the teaching he has received. From the first ages, the Church encouraged the study of the classics, to show the truths which even heathen philosophy could discover, and what great deeds heathen heroes in the natural order could perform. By their virtues the Romans, according to the fathers, merited to possess the dominion of the world, which was, in the providence of God, the type

<sup>1</sup> *Par. xviii. 67.*

<sup>2</sup> *Par. xxv. 21.*

<sup>3</sup> *Par. xix. 20.*

<sup>4</sup> *Par. xxxi. 6.*

<sup>5</sup> *Par. v. 97.*

and precursor of the kingdom of the Church. Thus the traditions of imperial Rome were in a manner consecrated, and passed by inheritance to Christian Italy. Every town had some hero of antiquity connected with its site, or could point to a ruin which spoke of former fame. Pisa claimed Pelops as its founder, Padua boasted of the tomb of Antenor, Rome itself was in its ruins still the city of Augustus. While the noble families of Italy showed a lineal descent from the ancient patrician stock, the Trasteverini peasants believed themselves of Trojan origin. The good dames, handling their distaffs, the poet says, would relate to their maidens

“Old tales of Troy, and Fesole, and Rome,”

—*Par.* xv. 119,

and recount, adds the *Ottimo Commento*, “that these three cities were the first of the world.” Dante thus stood on classic ground, and from his childhood had learnt to take for his first models of natural greatness the heroes, legendary or real, of imperial Rome. His ideal Rome is indeed the Eternal City, “onde Cristo è Romano.” But as a man and a patriot, he must impel his countrymen to noble deeds by the memory of their first forefathers, who knew only, “to die bravely, or live free” (*De Civ. Dei*). All the reverence he felt for that ancient world is seen in the part he assigns to Virgil, who, heathen though he be, represents reason and conscience, and therefore chides him whenever he turns aside to what is base or unworthy, and spurs him on to higher things. Such was the Catholic and Christian conception of antiquity, in its degree like the old dispensation, both by likeness and contrast, “a schoolmaster” leading to Christ, and as such it appears in the *Commedia*.

It will be seen then that Dante's genius, according to

Dr. Hettinger, whose view we follow, lay not so much in creating what was new, as in gathering up and recasting the dominant ideas of his time, and in giving them unity and form. He knows how to give them this unity, how to retain all things that are good wherever they are seen, how to embrace by the very sympathy and grasp of his nature all things truly human, and so to win the affection of his fellowmen; because supernaturally he sees all things in the light of God, and is so essentially Catholic, and, as he terms his poem, "divine."

We now come to the style of the poem. Style is to the poet what rhetoric is to the speaker. By his style he presents his thoughts in a manner to persuade, attract, and charm. Without Dante's style, Dante's matter might have been simply as it has been called, "an Encyclopedia of the knowledge of his time." Dr. Hettinger holds that for terseness and force, variety and appropriateness of expression, and music of rhythm, Dante stands alone. Nor is he singular in the high place he thus assigns him, as is seen by the opinion of the critics whom he cites. Of English Dante scholars, we will quote but one. Macaulay says of his style, "I know nothing with which it can be compared. The noblest models of Greek composition must yield to it. His words are the fewest and best which it is possible to use. The first expression in which he clothes his thoughts is always so energetic and comprehensive, that amplification would only injure the effect; there is probably no writer in any language who has presented so many strong pictures to the mind. Yet there is probably no writer equally concise. . . . I have heard the most eloquent statesman of the age remark, that next to Demosthenes, Dante is the writer who ought to be most attentively studied by every man who designs to attain oratorical eminence."

But only in its mother-tongue can the power of the

*Commedia* be fully felt; "now surging as the stormy sea, now soft as the evening breeze." The *Vision* of Dante and the language in which it is clothed are of twin birth, and they remain inseparably united. The *Commedia* belongs in its fulness to Italy alone. All that its lovers find in it, its strength and tenderness, the charm of its melody, and the beauty of its images, its pathos so human yet so divine, its earnestness and its faith, all these and much more can never be adequately conveyed in any foreign garb.

And yet, though no translation can do full justice to the original, the truths which Dante teaches may be studied with profit in any tongue. They speak in all time, and to every human heart, for they are, as he says, but rays from the Light Eternal. Above all, in these later days, when great and increasing is the multitude of undecided souls, "*anime triste*,"<sup>1</sup> who, having lost "*il ben dello intelletto*,"<sup>2</sup> spend their days in doubt; when men worship the heroes of the hour and pursue unceasingly a banner which whirls round with every breath,<sup>3</sup> it is well to learn that, "in most instances, current opinion leans to false,"<sup>4</sup> and to discover before too late the treachery of the Syren's glance.<sup>5</sup> Wise now the warning to look only to the truth-speaking eyes of Beatrice, and to attempt naught without the aid of the "*Donna del Cielo*"<sup>6</sup> which is needed as wings for flight. But true too the promise that with her aid we can stand, if need be, alone, and bravely and humbly can cross the "dark wood," and climb the steep ascent, until

"puro e disposto a salire alle stelle,"<sup>7</sup>

our eyes open on the Vision which never fades.

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The Catalogue of the British Museum gives the names of

<sup>1</sup> *Hell* iii. 35.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid* iii. 18.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid* iii. 50.

<sup>4</sup> *Par.* xiii. 114.

<sup>5</sup> *Purg.* xix. 13, 18.

<sup>6</sup> *Par.* xxxii. 29.

<sup>7</sup> *Purg.* xxxiii. 145.

thirty translations and twenty works on Dante, published in English during this century, while of the eighteenth century appears but one composition on the same subject; a sufficient proof of the interest reawakened in the study of the *Commedia*. But of these writings, not one is from the pen of a Catholic author; the publication therefore of this English translation of Dr. Hettinger's *Essay* seems scarcely to need an apology.

Of the *Essays* on Dante, that by Macaulay already quoted seems to have been one of the first which cleared away the false judgment on the poem till then prevailing, brought to light its real merits, and gave Dante his true place amongst us.

Dean Church's *Essay*, first published in the *Christian Remembrancer*, Jan. 1850, and republished in 1879, in a separate form, has, more than any other work, given impulse to the study of the *Commedia*. Our points of difference with the author are already noted. As an introduction to the poem,—pointing out Dante's power of description and graphic skill, his minute and accurate delineation of nature, and the earnestness and loftiness of his aim,—the Dean's *Essay* presents all the merit which might be expected from so accomplished a scholar, and is marked by that grace, delicacy, and facility of expression which the author has ever at command.

Of the prose translations of the *Commedia*, in the first rank, are those of the *Inferno* by Dr. Carlyle; of the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* by Mr. A. T. Butler. Mr. Butler's translations are supplemented with notes untranslated from the *Summa* and *Aristotle*. The verse translations in rhyme by Wright and Longfellow are perhaps in most general repute. Mr. Wright has, however, in defiance of the best recent authorities, embodied in his notes Rossetti's obsolete and virulent rhapsodies. Of the translations in *terza rima*,

the best known is that of J. R. Sibbald, 1884; the latest is by Dean Plumptre, only just published, December, 1886.

Of the various English versions of the *Commedia*, we have preferred that of Cary, who is to our mind among all competitors still *facile princeps*. Blank verse can of course give no resemblance to the sound or rhythm of the original, but mere superficial resemblance,—and little more than that is gained by most English imitations of Dante's verse,—has only that likeness to its exemplar which a wax figure bears to a living man, because made to wear his clothes. The first impression deceives, but only the first. A portrait, on the other hand, attempts no trick, but presents on canvas the idea the painter retains of the face and form depicted. A portrait has a truth of its own, and a portrait by a master hand lives and speaks. And Cary is, we think, a master as regards the *Commedia*. He has studied Dante till he has made the poet's thought and purpose his own, and he reproduces them with the earnestness, reverence, and fidelity they demand. If we lose the sound, we hear the truths of the original in all their solemn dignity, and in language which could only find expression from one who was himself, as Macaulay says, a poetic genius. The accuracy of his philosophical and theological terms could only have been obtained by a patient study of St. Thomas. Macaulay says of Cary's translation, "It is difficult to determine whether the author deserves most praise for his intimacy with the language of Dante, or his extraordinary mastery over his own."

The translation of the footnotes, especially the quotations from the *Summa*, has of course been an extremely difficult task, since for many of the scholastic phrases no English equivalent exists. The Editor is fully conscious of the defective result of his best efforts; but as the purpose of the essay is to show by these quotations the sources of the

*Commedia*, they could not be omitted, and untranslated they would have been of little use to many readers.

The translations which have been consulted have been, it is believed, duly acknowledged. That by F. J. Church of the *De Monarchia* has been very frequently referred to, but this and other translations have only been adopted as far as seemed advisable, and in few instances are literally quoted. Dr. Hettinger himself as a rule epitomises the text of the *De Monarchia*.

The present version of Dr. Hettinger's *Essay* has been considerably abridged, without loss, it is hoped, to the substance or argument of the original matter. The chapters also have been rearranged with new headings, in place of separate books, the German mode of division. The chapter on the "Moral Order" has been omitted, its contents being already given in other portions of the work. All matter added by the Editor is bracketed. In the footnotes "C" stands for Cary, "S" for the *Summa*.

In conclusion, the Editor has only to return his sincere thanks to the friends who have bestowed much time and toil on the translation and the revision of the following pages. To their assistance is due whatever merit the version may possess. The Editor also begs to record his special obligation to the Rev. Father Keogh of the London Oratory, for his careful correction of the whole work, but especially of the scholastic portion.

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*His Eminence the Cardinal-Archbishop of Westminster has deigned to commend the English version of Dr. Hettinger's work in the following letter :—*

ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE, May 28, 1885.

MY DEAR FATHER BOWDEN,—You have conferred a true benefit upon us by publishing Dr. Hettinger's work on Dante. It will be not only a signal help to readers of the *Divina Commedia*, but it will, I hope, awaken Catholics to a sense of the not inculpable neglect of the greatest of poets, who by every title of genius, and by the intensity of his whole heart and soul, is the master-poet of the Catholic Faith. Excepting Ozanam's beautiful *Dante et la Philosophie Chrétienne*,—for I can hardly refer to Rossetti's edition,—I know of no Catholic who has in our time made a translation or a comment on Dante. It has fallen to non-Catholic hands to honour his name. Perhaps it may be because of certain burning words against the human and secular scandals in the mediæval world. Bellarmine has long ago cleared away those aspersions from the Catholic loyalty of Dante.

There are three books which always seem to me to form a triad of Dogma, of Poetry, and of Devotion,—the *Summa* of St. Thomas, the *Divina Commedia*, and the *Paradisus Animæ*. All three contain the same outline of the Faith. St. Thomas traces it on the intellect, Dante upon the imagination, and the *Paradisus Animæ* upon the heart. The poem unites the book of Dogma and the book of Devotion, and is in itself both Dogma and Devotion clothed in conceptions of intensity and of beauty which have never been surpassed or equalled. No uninspired hand has ever written thoughts so high, in words so burning and so resplendent, as the last stanzas of the *Divina Commedia*. It was said of St. Thomas,



"*Post summam Thomæ nihil restat nisi lumen gloriæ.*" It may be said of Dante, *Post Dantis paradisum nihil restat nisi visio Dei.*

Nella profonda e chiara sussistenza  
Dell' alto lume parvemi tre giri  
Di tre colori e d' una contenenza.

E l' un dall' altro, come Iri da Iri,  
Parea riflesso, e 'l terzo parea fuoco.  
Che quinci e quindi igualmente si spiri.

O luce eterna, che sola in te sidi,  
Sola t' intendi, e da te intelletta  
Ed intendente te ami ed arridi !

Dentro da sè del suo colore stesso  
Mi parve pinta della nostra effige :  
Perchè il mio viso in lei tutto era messo.

*Paradiso xxxiii. 115, &c.*

These words are almost the last words of the *Gloria in Excelsis*. Believe me always, yours affectionately,

HENRY E., *Card.-Archbishop.*

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

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THE *Divina Commedia*, with its triple web of poetry, science, and religion, has, especially of late years, become the heritage of all cultivated minds. But the poem is based on a conception of the world now little known, and therefore its real meaning is rarely understood, and its best and highest truths are neither realised nor appreciated.

The aim then of the following essay is to show the essence and purport of Dante's Vision, to point out to lovers of serious Christian poetry

"the lore conceal'd

Under close texture of the mystic strain" \*—

to give an impulse to its study, and to furnish a few hints to guide the student on his way.

An exhaustive commentary on the *Commedia*, or another contribution to the mass of Dantesque erudition, now so much in vogue in Germany, Italy, France, and England, or a new key to its difficult passages, form no part of the author's plan. On the contrary, he has studiously refrained from any explanations save those offered by the science of earlier times. Viewed thus

\* *Hell*, ix. 63.

by the light of philosophy and theology, the *Commedia* is seen in its true character and purpose, while all fanciful and forced interpretations necessarily disappear. The author has naturally felt tempted to illustrate his subject, more especially from the writings of SS. Augustine, Bernard, Boethius, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, and from those of the monks of S. Victor, but further quotations of this kind seemed unadvisable, seeing the class of readers for whom this essay is chiefly intended.

WURZBURG,

*The anniversary of the poet's death, 1886.*

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# THE SCOPE AND VALUE

OF THE

## DIVINA COMMEDIA.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF DANTE.

POINTING towards heaven, like a cathedral of the Middle Ages, the *Divina Commedia* towers above all similar works of later date. It stands on a height, the culminating point of a great historical period — a period when civil society and the Imperial court, law and science, poetry and art, had become as fully possessed of the spirit of Christianity as the Church or the Papacy itself. Thus the world had put on a new face, and a new order of things was established. It was as if some creative breath had passed over the ruins of the shattered Roman world, and regenerated the life of man in all his ways, and to the very depths of his soul.

This universal triumph of Christian principles had produced what we call Christendom. All baptized persons, as fellow-members of one communion, held one common view of life, and worked together with kindred sympathy for one common end. The reality of this union was shown

most nobly in the Crusades, which, under the control and leadership of the Popes, drove back the Crescent, and thus rescued morality and freedom from the polygamy and despotism of the Oriental Caliphs. Christendom sent missionaries to the farthest North and East. It founded the great Dominican and Franciscan Orders, as well as those of the Teutonic Knights and the Knights of St. John; it imparted new life to learning by the establishment of universities; it gave to Germany her poets, to Italy her painters; and in the cathedrals of the great towns, which grew up under the shadow of the Church, Christendom built itself memorials which will last for all time.

"Among the Western nations," says Vilmar, "the spirit of Christianity had become in truth the national spirit. No doubt its influence was most powerfully felt by the higher classes and the clergy, but it had also thoroughly penetrated the masses, and was to them no longer a mere doctrine, but an existing fact, the very element in which they lived and breathed. The faith was man's best possession and the chief source of his joy. There was a widespread happiness in the Church, a joy in her interior and exterior glory, and a universal satisfaction in her gifts, such as has never since prevailed. So deeply rooted was this sense of spiritual peace, that after two centuries of strife between Emperors and Popes it remained undisturbed."

The ideal which this new-born Christian world had set itself to realise was indeed sublime. But the noblest aims have to be achieved by mortal and erring men. And alas! how great is the contrast between the ideal as it emanates from its eternal source and its realisation in history and in the light of common day. Thus even amid the grand harmonies produced by Christian life in the thirteenth century, the ear detects from time to time a discordant note, the precursor of coming strife. Unity had reached

its highest development, and the beginning of dissolution was at hand.

This is the century which brought forth Dante, and the pulse of his time beats in him. He is the impersonation of his age, a living mirror of all that filled the minds and stirred the hearts and wills of the nations. Standing on the threshold between two worlds, he looked yearningly back on the faded glories of the Empire, and clung to the hope that, reunited with the Papacy, it would rise again from the depths to which it had sunk, and so restore "to the human family the everlasting peace of God." The attacks of kings, especially of Philip the Fair, upon the Sovereign Pontiff, the revolt of cities against the Emperor, and their miserable and endless intestine quarrels, drew from Dante lamentations, in themselves an unconscious prophecy of the new era whose dawn was already visible. The day indeed was fast approaching when the towns should be freed from their feudal lords, the urban democracies from the Imperial monarchy, and the separate nationalities, with their individual language, interests, and aims, would break off from the vast community which had hitherto been jointly ruled by Pope and Emperor. The great struggle begun by Gregory VII. for the Church's authority and independence, which alone could secure the purity of the priesthood and eradicate the taint of simony, was brought to a successful issue at the Concordat of Worms in 1122. Her freedom of election to spiritual offices was restored, absolute lay patronage in ecclesiastical appointments was repressed. Things spiritual and temporal were divided. But harder conflicts than these were still to be fought. The cries of "Guelf!" and "Ghibelline!" had already been raised under Conrad, the first of the Hohenstaufen kings. Since the coronation of Frederick II. as Emperor of Germany in 1220, the supporters of the Imperial prerogatives had been called Ghibellines, in opposition

to Otto of Bavaria, the Guelf leader, who raised his standard in behalf of the liberty of the Church and the independence of the Italian cities.<sup>1</sup>

The contest raged on until the death of Conrad in 1268, and the consequent extinction of the Hohenstaufens. This event released the Church from the danger of being enslaved by a hostile Empire, which claimed all the rights of ancient Rome and threatened the Papal States not only in the North, but also from Sicily on the South. But a new peril now loomed on the side of France. This was the monarchical principle, which formed of each state separate kingdoms, such as now exist.

Frederick II. had already availed himself of this policy to arouse in Sicily a spirit of overweening national independence, which aimed openly at the subjugation and enslavement of the Church. The "Babylonian captivity" of the Popes in Avignon, which lasted from 1305 to 1377, was already beginning to forecast its shadow. In Italy itself the great party names of Guelf and Ghibelline had sunk from their historical significance to serve only as a cloak to the petty personal and family enmities aroused by the endless civic feuds. Dante bewails the melancholy picture his country presents of mutual provocation, bloodshed, and treachery :

" Ah, slavish Italy ! thou inn of grief !  
 Vessel without a pilot in loud storm !  
 Lady no longer of fair provinces,  
 But brothel-house impure ! . . . .  
 . . . . . While now thy living ones  
 In thee abide not without war, and one  
 Malicious gnaws another ; ay, of those

---

<sup>1</sup> Hence Villani calls the Guelf cities, Milan and Florence, "the firm and enduring rock of Italy's freedom." It was their feudal, not their Imperial, masters whom the Italian cities strove to overthrow.

Whom the same wall and the same moat contains.  
 Seek, wretched one! around thy sea-coasts wide,  
 Then homeward to thy bosom turn, and mark  
 If any part of thee sweet peace enjoy."—*Purg.* vi. 76.

No sooner had the towns succeeded in winning their independence than they found themselves at the mercy of the populace, and thence fell into the clutches of tyrants such as Ezzelino, Visconte, Malatesta, and others, who assumed the titles of *capitano del popolo* or *podestà*. The corruption and disorganisation that ensued are described by Dante's ancestor, Cacciaguida, who died in 1147 :

" Florence, within her ancient limit-mark,  
 Which calls her still to matin prayers and noon,<sup>1</sup>  
 Was chaste and sober and abode in peace ;  
 She had no armlets and no head-tires then,  
 No purpled dames, no zone that caught the eye<sup>2</sup>  
 More than the person did. Time was not yet,  
 When at his daughter's birth the sire grew pale,  
 For fear the age and dowry should exceed,  
 On each side, just proportion. House was none  
 Void of its family : nor yet had come  
 Sardanapalus, to exhibit feats  
 Of chamber prowess. Montemalo<sup>3</sup> yet  
 O'er our suburban turret rose, as much  
 To be surpast in fall, as in its rising.  
 I saw Bellincion Berti<sup>4</sup> walk abroad  
 In leathern girdle and a clasp of bone,  
 And, with no artful colouring on her cheeks,  
 His lady leave the glass. The sons I saw  
 Of Nerli and of Vecchio, well content

---

<sup>1</sup> The abbey tower, with its clock, being still within the limits of the ancient walls.

<sup>2</sup> Because merely used for show.

<sup>3</sup> From Montemalo (Montemario) Rome can be seen, as Florence from Uccellatoio.

<sup>4</sup> Bellincion Berti de' Ravignani belonged to one of the principal families. and is here named for all the others.

With unrobed jerkin, and their good dames handling  
 The spindle and the flax. O happy they!  
 Each sure of burial in her native land,  
 And none left desolate a-bed for France.<sup>1</sup>  
 One waked to tend the cradle, hushing it  
 With sounds that lull'd the parent's infancy:  
 Another, with her maidens, drawing off  
 The tresses from the distaff, lectured them  
 Old tales of Troy, and Fesole, and Rome.  
 A Salterello and Cianghella we  
 Had held as strange a marvel, as ye would  
 A Cincinnatus or Cornelia now."—*Par.* xv. 92.

Dante was born at a time when Italy contained within itself all the world had of great or noble. The national character, at once sympathetic and generous, violent and passionate, great alike in its virtues and in its vices, had freely developed under the joint rule of the Emperors and the Popes. For two centuries Italy had been the stage on which the world's history had been acted, and all the capabilities and energies of her people had been called into the fullest activity. No virtue was wanting—generous self-sacrifice, a perfect spirit of detachment and penance, a love of God and man amazing in its purity and intensity, but, side by side with all this, egotism and treachery, relentless cruelty and coarse sensuality were rampant and unabashed.

The poet's birthplace was Florence, a city founded by the Romans, and second only to Rome in the influence it exercised on the history of Italy. At the beginning of the twelfth century the place was torn by the rival factions of the Guelfs and Ghibellines. The original cause of the feud was the murder of Buondelmonti, a scion of an ancient and powerful family, who, though betrothed to a daughter

<sup>1</sup> Business affairs took the Florentines to France, so that the women who remained at home were bereft of their husbands, or, if they went with them, died in a foreign land.

of the house of Giantruffetti, had married another lady. He was slain by the outraged Giantruffetti on his wedding-day. Both parties summoned their adherents to arms, but at the command of Frederick II., who sent German horsemen into the city to support the Ghibellines, the Guelfs were driven out, and their fortress-like houses and palaces levelled to the ground. Soon after, the Ghibellines were forced to succumb to their opponents, who had one by one returned to the city. Once more, however, they rose, assisted by King Manfred and the Siennese, and were victorious at Montaperti in 1260; but when Manfred fell at Benevento in 1266, the fortunes of the Ghibellines sank again.

Dante's ancestors were Guelfs, and had in consequence been repeatedly banished from Florence. His forefather, Cacciaguida, was born there in 1091 (*Par.* xvi. 31); he married Aldighiera of the Aldighieris, most probably a Ferrarese lady, and her descendants were called, after her, Aldigeri, Alaghieri, Aligeri, or Alighieri. His father was a professor of law, who married first Lapa di' Chiarissimo Ciatuffi, and, after her death, Bella, whose family is not named. She is only once mentioned by Dante, where Virgil says to him :

"O soul  
Justly disdainful! Blest was she in whom  
Thou wast conceived."—*Hell*, viii. 42.

Her son Dante (short for Durante) was born in May 1265. Before his birth, Boccaccio tells us, his mother had a dream. She dreamt that she found herself in a green meadow, under a great laurel tree, beside a copious spring. There she gave birth to a son, who fed only on the berries that fell from the tree and drank from the clear stream. In a short time he grew up to be a shepherd, and tried to break off some sprays from the tree. Suddenly his mother



saw him fall, and when he rose again, he had changed into a peacock. "This," adds the narrator, "was that Dante of whom we are now speaking; this is that Dante who by God's special grace has appeared in our time; this was that Dante who first opened the way for the return of the banished Muses to Italy. He was the first to bring to light the beauty of the Florentine tongue, and to subject it to the laws of art: by him dead Poesy was restored to life."<sup>1</sup>

Dante, however, congratulates himself on having been born under a lucky constellation:<sup>2</sup>

"O glorious stars!  
O light impregnate with exceeding virtue!  
To whom whate'er of genius lifteth me  
Above the vulgar, grateful I refer;  
With ye the parent of all mortal life  
Arose and set,<sup>3</sup> when I did first inhale  
The Tuscan air; and afterward, when grace  
Vouchsafed me entrance to the lofty wheel<sup>4</sup>  
That in its orb impels ye, fate decreed  
My passage at your clime. To you my soul  
Devoutly sighs, for virtue, even now,  
To meet the hard emprize that draws me on."

—*Par.* xxii. 108.

Dante's father died when he had only attained his ninth year, and thus the care of his education devolved upon his mother, Bella. The ordinary curriculum in those days consisted of the Trivium and Quadrivium, the seven liberal arts—grammar, rhetoric, dialectics, arithmetic, geometry,

<sup>1</sup> *Vita di Dante*, p. 11, ed. Venez.

<sup>2</sup> The constellation of the Gemini is pointed out by astrologers, as the one under whose influence scholars, poets, and prophets came into the world.

<sup>3</sup> The sun was in the constellation of the Gemini at the time of Dante's birth.

<sup>4</sup> The eighth heaven, that of the fixed stars.

music, and astronomy.<sup>1</sup> Many aspiring spirits were attracted to the Universities of Padua and Bologna by the higher philosophical studies there pursued, and, according to Boccaccio and Benvenuto da Imola, Dante attended both.<sup>2</sup> It seems improbable that he was acquainted with Greek, notwithstanding the Greek words scattered here and there through the *Commedia*. The knowledge of that language was not attempted by ordinary students in his time.

The mental atmosphere which surrounded Dante in that spring-tide of literature and art, which burst upon Tuscany in the thirteenth century, must have had quite as much influence on his intellectual development as his regular education. A host of distinguished names appear either contemporaneously with or immediately before his own—Guittone d'Arezzo, Guido Orlandi, Guido Lapo, Chiaro Davanzati, Salvino Doni, Cino da Pistoja, Guido Cavalcanti, Brunetto Latini. The latter, who died in 1294, was in a special manner Dante's master and friend in his youth, and is in consequence immortalised in his poem :

“ ‘ Were all my wish fulfill'd, ' I straight replied,  
‘ Thou from the confines of man's nature yet

<sup>1</sup> *Convito*, il. 14. The *Doctrinale Puerorum*, written at the end of the twelfth century, and falsely ascribed to Boetius, gives us an insight into the education of the boys of that time. Cf. Daniel, *Die Klassischen Studien in der christlichen Gesellschaft*, p. 106. The poems of Lucan, of Statius, and above all of Virgil, who, in the midst of Paganism, prophesied the coming of the Redeemer, were specially read by the young.

<sup>2</sup> [There is reason to believe that Dante's love of learning at some time of his life led him as far as Paris, and even to Oxford. This latter fact rests on a passage in the Latin poems of Boccaccio, and on the authority of Giovanni da Serravalle, Bishop of Fermo, who, as Tiraboschi observes, though he lived a century later than Dante, might have known his contemporaries. The Bishop, while he was attending the Council of Constance, 1414, wrote an inedited commentary on the *Commedia*, and, at the instance of Cardinal Amedeo di Saluzzo and of two English bishops, Nicholas Bubwith of Bath and Robert Halam of Salisbury, who were also assisting at the Council, translated the poem itself into Latin prose. Tiraboschi, *Stor. della Poesia Ital.*, vol. ii. c. iv. p. 14.—C., *Preface*, p. xi.]

Hadst not been driven forth ; for in my mind  
 Is fix'd, and now strikes full upon my heart,  
 The dear, benign, paternal image, such  
 As thine was, when so lately thou didst teach me  
 The way for man to win eternity :  
 And how I prized the lesson, it behoves  
 That, long as life endures, my tongue should speak.'"

—*Hell*, xv. 79.

Brunetto Latini was the composer of the *Trésor*, a kind of encyclopedia of all sciences, including politics, written in French<sup>1</sup> and also of the *Tesoretto*, an allegorical and didactic poem in Italian, in part an abstract from the larger work. Villani<sup>2</sup> the chronicler says of him, "There died in Florence a worthy citizen, by name Brunetto Latini, who was a great philosopher and rhetorician, both as a speaker and by his writings. He expounded Cicero's *Rhetoric*, and wrote that good and useful book the *Tesoro*, and also the *Tesoretto*, and many other philosophical treatises. He was secretary to our commonwealth. We have mentioned him because he was the first to bring culture to the Florentines. He taught them the art of speaking well, and to be guided in the affairs of the commonwealth by the rules of sound policy." He first introduced Dante to classic literature. Boccaccio describes Dante as thoroughly familiar with Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Statius, and all the other famous poets. He knew the *Æneid* by heart and took it as his model :

" ' And art thou then that Virgil, that well-spring,  
 From which such copious floods of eloquence  
 Have issued ? ' I with front abash'd replied.  
 ' Glory and light of all the tuneful strain,  
 May it avail me, that I long with zeal  
 Have sought thy volume, and with love immense

<sup>1</sup> Vincent of Beauvais, who died in 1264, had already written his great work *Speculum majus*.

<sup>2</sup> *Hist. lib.* viii. c. x.

Have conn'd it o'er. My master thou, and guide!  
 Thou<sup>1</sup> he from whom alone I have derived  
 That style, which for its beauty into fame  
 Exalts me."—*Hell*, i. 75.

Another old friend of Dante's was the poet Guido Cavalcanti, son of the philosopher and poet, Cavalcanti dei Cavalcanti. Dante praises his style, and calls him the earliest of the friends of his youth. He was the first to recognise his poetical gifts, and to him the *Vita Nuova* is dedicated. But Guido died early, apparently in 1300. How close their friendship was, is shown in the poem by the surprise of Guido's father at meeting Dante unaccompanied by his son :

"If thou through this blind prison go'st,  
 Led by thy lofty genius and profound,  
 Where is my son, and wherefore not with thee?"  
 —*Hell*, x. 57.

His eloquence is extolled in the lines :

"Thus hath one Guido<sup>2</sup> from the other snatch'd  
 The letter'd prize; and he, perhaps, is born,  
 Who shall drive either from their nest."  
 —*Purg.* xi. 96.

Cino da Pistoja, born in 1270, was a later friend. He appears to have been a professor of law and at the same time a poet, and, like Guido, to have won Dante's friendship by responding to his first sonnets in a similar poem.<sup>3</sup> In his book *De Vulgari Eloquentia* he several times calls Cino his friend.

<sup>1</sup> "Tu se' lo mio maestro, e 'l mio autore,  
 Tu se' solo colui," &c.

<sup>2</sup> [Guido Guinelli of Bologna was eclipsed by Guido Cavalcanti. For a comparison between the rival merits of these two poets, see C., *Purg.* xi. 93.]

<sup>3</sup> "Cino da Pistoja e l'amico suo."—*De Vulgar. Eloqu.*, i. 10, 13, 16.

This century brought with it as great a revival in painting as in poetry. Dante mentions Oderigi of Agobbio as a distinguished miniature painter, Franco Bolognese, as a master in the same art, the painter Cimabue, and especially extols Giotto di Bordone. The latter, who died in 1336, was his intimate friend. Benvenuto da Imola states that when Dante came to Padua, Giotto, who was decorating the chapel of the Madonna dell' Arena in that town, received him as his guest. The painting of Dante as a young man,<sup>1</sup> discovered in 1840 on the wall of the Chapel of the Podestà in Florence, is by his hand. We gather from a passage in the *Vita Nuova*<sup>2</sup> that Dante was himself a painter. According to Leonardo Aretino, his second biographer, he excelled in this art. The accuracy with which he describes all details of proportion in the construction of the three kingdoms of his other world seems to indicate the fine sense of form and practised eye of an artist, and would tend to corroborate this statement.

Both Leonardo and Boccaccio say that Dante loved and understood music and singing. This is indeed implied in many passages in the *Divina Commedia*,<sup>3</sup> and confirmed by the fact that both in Italy and Germany at that period lyric poetry was always intended to be sung. All canzoni were actually sung, and sonnets were accompanied on the guitar. Among the great singers of that day, Casella was one of Dante's most intimate friends; and according to the oldest commentators, it was he who set the poet's songs to music. Thus he is made to appear in the first circle of Purgatory, to greet the new arrivals, and entrances them by the sweetness of his singing:

<sup>1</sup> [The frontispiece of this work is from Giotto's portrait.]

<sup>2</sup> "On the first anniversary of the day on which this lady (Beatrice) entered into life eternal, I was engaged in designing an angel from her image as stamped on my memory."—*Vita Nuova*, § 35.

<sup>3</sup> *Hell*, iii. 22, v. 27; *Purg.* ii. 45, ix. 134, xii. 103; *Par.* viii. 19, xiv. 26, xx. 133, xxiii. 98.

"It answered: 'Thee as in my mortal frame  
I loved, so loosed from it I love thee still,  
And therefore pause: but why walkest thou here?'

Then I: 'If new law taketh not from thee  
Memory or custom of love-tuned song,  
That whilom all my cares had power to swage;  
Please thee therewith a little to console  
My spirit, that, encumber'd with its frame,  
Traveling so far, of pain is overcome.'<sup>1</sup>  
'Love that discourses in my thoughts,' he then  
Began in such soft accents, that within  
The sweetness thrills me yet. My gentle guide,  
And all who came with him, so well were pleased,  
That seem'd nought else might in their thoughts have  
room."—*Purg.* ii. 84.

Belacqua, who was a singer and guitar-maker, is also mentioned by the poet (*Purg.* iv. 102).

Thus all the circumstances of Dante's youth were singularly favourable—great natural gifts and untiring energy, loving and large-minded teachers, a circle of friends who were proficient in all the arts and sciences of the day, a social position which secured him from all pressure of care or penury. "For though," says Leonardo Aretino, "he was not wealthy, yet neither was he poor. He possessed a moderate patrimony, sufficient to maintain him comfortably; houses in Florence, property in Camerata, in Piacenza, and in Piano di Ripoli; abundance of handsome household furniture. He himself was a noble person, graceful and dignified, and of an agreeable countenance. And although he was a scholar, he did not therefore withdraw himself from the world, but associated freely with other young men, and excelled in all their exercises. And it was wonderful how, though he was always studying, yet he never seemed to do so, but lived pleasantly with his companions."

<sup>1</sup> ["Amor che nella mente mi ragiona." The first verse of a canzone in the *Convito* of Dante, apparently set to music by Casella.—C.]

In the poem Beatrice describes his youth as full of gladness and rich in all the gifts of nature and grace :

"Not alone  
Through operation of the mighty orbs,  
That mark each seed to some predestined aim,  
As with aspect or fortunate or ill  
The constellations meet ; but through benign  
Largess of heavenly graces, which rain down  
From such a height as mocks our vision, this man  
Was, in the freshness of his being,<sup>1</sup> such,  
So gifted virtually, that in him  
All better habits wondrously had thrived."

—*Purg.* xxx. 110.

An event befell Dante in his boyhood which powerfully influenced his whole after life. This was his ideal love for Beatrice. His devotion to her lasted till death, and in a highly spiritualised form appears in the *Divina Commedia*. He tells us himself how his attachment began.<sup>2</sup> "She was about entering on her ninth year, and mine was drawing to a close. Her dress on that day was of a most noble colour, a subdued and comely red,<sup>3</sup> girdled and adorned in such a sort as best suited with her tender age. . . . From that time forth, I say, that love held sovereign empire over my soul, which had so readily been betrothed unto him ; and through the influence lent him by my imagination, he at once assumed such imperious sway and masterdom over me, that I could not choose but do his pleasure in all things. Oftentimes he enjoined me to strive, if so I might behold this youngest of the angels ; wherefore did I during my boyish years frequently go in search of her ; and so praiseworthy was she, and so noble in her bearing, that of

<sup>1</sup> *Nella sua Vita Nuova*, the poet's work so called, written in his youth, is by some supposed to be here alluded to.

<sup>2</sup> *Vita Nuova*, § 3. This must, therefore, have occurred in May, 1274.

<sup>3</sup> Red is the colour assigned by the Church ritual to the Holy Spirit, the spirit of love.

her might with truth be spoken that saying of the poet Homer—

‘She of a god seemed born, and not of mortal man.’”

Beatrice was the daughter of Falco Portinari, a wealthy and respected Florentine, who in his latter years founded the Hospital of Santa Maria Nuova. Nine years later Dante met Beatrice again, and she addressed some words of salutation to him. Upon this he wrote his first sonnet and sent it to some of the most eminent poets of his time. Soon after she was married to a rich Florentine, Simon de Bardi; but this did not disturb Dante, who still continued to compose sonnets in her praise. In 1290 she died, at the age of twenty-four.

If we consider Dante's depth of feeling and the early development of his richly gifted nature, the strong impression made by Beatrice on the boy of nine need not surprise us. His love for her was wholly ideal; it impelled him ever to what was great and noble. Through her he raised himself “above the common herd” (*Hell*, ii. 105); she, again, taught him to love virtue (*Purg.* xxx. 123), and from “slave to freedom brought” him (*Par.* xxxi. 75). The fact of his devotion to her as his ideal continuing both after her marriage and his own with Gemma Donati in 1293 is open to misapprehension, but is fully explained by the usages of mediæval chivalry, which the Troubadours had brought from France to Italy. The homage which knights and minstrels paid to their ladies had nothing to do with merely human love or natural ties. Dante and Beatrice met in a region which was purely spiritual, and though the customs of chivalry may have often been perverted, in the case of Dante his whole career and character forbid the suspicion of anything but what was pure and noble. The tone of his poetry points to the same conclusion. It bears no trace of the light-hearted gallantry common to



the Provençal minstrelsy, but is marked by a religious earnestness evidently inspired by the hymns of St. Francis, of the B. Jacopone, and of the other poets of the Franciscan Order, with whom he was closely allied. As St. Francis worshipped God in nature and called upon the sun, moon, and stars to give Him honour, so Dante saw in Beatrice a creature of the divine goodness and beauty, and gave glory to God in her.

Thus the death of Beatrice could make no essential difference in their mutual relations. It is true, as Boccaccio says, that her death so deeply affected him that those around him feared for his life. But his love for her, far from dying, only became more wholly spiritualised. All his higher life fastens itself on Beatrice. She is to him the symbol of the Divine Wisdom and Love; she leads him into Paradise and shows him the secrets of the life beyond the grave. Love is the key-note of his life; its sustaining hand raises him even to the vision of God. The veil drops from his eyes; he gazes on the uncreated beauty before him, and in the ocean of light and love eternal his soul is satiated and at rest.

“But yet the will roll’d onward, like a wheel  
In even motion, by the Love impell’d  
That moves the sun in heaven and all the stars.”  
—*Par.* xxxiii. 133.

Two and a half years had elapsed since the death of Beatrice when the temptation to unfaithfulness came to him. He himself has described it for us. “Having sat for some space sorely in thought because of the time that was now past, I was so filled with dolorous imaginings that it became outwardly manifest in mine altered countenance. Whereupon feeling this, and being in dread lest any should have seen me, I lifted mine eyes to look, and then perceived a young and very beautiful lady, who was gazing

upon me from a window, with a gaze so full of pity that the very sum of all pity appeared gathered together in her. And seeing that unhappy persons, when they beget compassion in others, are then most moved to weeping, as though they also felt pity for themselves, it came to pass that mine eyes began to be inclined to tears. . . . It happened after this, that whensoever I was seen of this lady, she became pale and of a piteous countenance, as though it had been with love; whereby she reminded me many times of my own most noble lady, who was wont to be of a like paleness. And I know that often, when I could not weep, nor in any way give ease unto mine anguish, I went to look upon this lady, and the mere sight of her seemed to bring tears to my eyes. . . . At length, by the constant sight of this lady, mine eyes began to be gladdened overmuch with her company."

In the *Convito*<sup>1</sup> this lady is allegorically represented as Philosophy, in which Dante found consolation after the death of Beatrice. But it is quite clear from many passages in the *Divina Commedia*, from Beatrice's reproaches (*Purg.* xxx., xxxi.), his own confessions, and his letter to Count Malaspina, that the lady was a real person, and that he felt the pleasure afforded by her society as a temptation of inconstancy to his ideal. He found, however, a better solace, and a means of withdrawing himself from this dangerous occasion, in the study of philosophy and theology,<sup>2</sup> to which he now devoted himself in the monastic schools. But it was only after a prolonged conflict that he was again master of himself. "Against this adversary of reason," he tells us at the close of the *Vita Nuova*, "there rose up in me on a certain day, about the ninth hour, a strong visible phantasy, wherein I seemed to behold the most precious Beatrice, habited in that red raiment which she had worn when I first beheld her; also she

<sup>1</sup> *Convito*, ii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

appeared to me of the same tender age as then. Whereupon I fell into a deep thought of her; and my memory ran back, according to the order of time, on all those matters in the which she had borne a part; and my heart began painfully to repent of the desire by which it had so readily let itself be possessed during so many days, contrary to the constancy of reason. And so I drove away disordered desire, and turned with my whole mind once more to the most noble Beatrice." At the end of the *Vita Nuova* comes this remarkable confession: "After writing this sonnet, it was given unto me to behold a very wonderful vision, wherein I saw things which determined me that I would say nothing further of this most blessed one, until such time as I could discourse more worthily of her; and to this end I labour all I can, as she well knoweth. Wherefore, if it be His pleasure through whom is the life of all things, that my life continue with me a few more years, it is my hope that I shall yet write concerning her what hath not before been written of any woman. After the which may it seem good unto Him who is the Master of grace, that my spirit should go hence to behold the glory of its lady, to wit, of that blessed Beatrice, who ever gazeth continually on His countenance, *qui est per omnia sæcula benedictus. Laus Deo.*" Thus it is evident that the idea of the *Commedia* had already dawned on the mind of the poet, though its accomplishment belongs to the latter half of his life.

Buti,<sup>1</sup> who wrote a commentary on the *Divina Commedia* sixty years after the death of Dante, says that he entered the Order of St. Francis, but only for a time, and left before taking the vows. Others assert, with more probability, that he belonged to the Third Order of this Saint, which embraces all ranks and classes, and allows its members to pursue their ordinary avocations in the world.

<sup>1</sup> Balbo, *Vita di Dante*, p. 95.

Amongst the Tertiaries already enrolled were kings and queens, St. Louis of France, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, and brave soldiers, such as Guido de Montefeltro, Lanciotto and others of equal fame. The special predilection for St. Francis and St. Clare which the poet manifests throughout the *Commedia*, and his wrath against those who had impeded the inward development of the Order, appear to indicate some close connection with it. Indeed, his enrolment as a Tertiary seems explicitly stated in the following lines :—

“ I had a cord that braced my girdle round,  
Wherewith I erst had thought fast bound to take  
The painted leopard.”<sup>1</sup>—*Hell*, xvi. 106.

In any case, the Franciscans of Ravenna claimed his body, and his name is entered in the roll of their dead.

It is probable that the poet's residence in Paris falls about this time, though Boccaccio assigns to it a later date. His mention of the master, Sigebert<sup>2</sup> (*Par.* x. 132), who died before 1300, of the physician Peter de la Brosse (*Purg.* vi. 23), Philip the Bold's favourite, and his description of the Rhone at Arles (*Hell*, ix. 111), are clear indications that he had spent some time in France. It was in the course of these studies that Dante gained that familiarity with the Holy Scriptures which is discernible in all his writings. The scenery, the imagery, the language of the *Commedia*, and especially of *Purgatory* and *Paradise*, are scriptural throughout. It is to this that the poem owes its depth of thought, and that sacred character, that breath of supernatural life which fills the soul with a holy joy, such as the work by its mere artistic perfection could never have produced.

Dante was not only a man of warm heart and reflective

<sup>1</sup> This animal symbolises sensuality.

<sup>2</sup> [A monk of the Abbey of Gemblours. His chief work, the *Chronica*, is intended to justify, from history, the Ghibelline claims.]

mind, but in active life he had few equals. The fall and tragic end of Conrad at Naples, the Sicilian Vespers, the contests of the Guelfs and Ghibellines, Ugolino's rise and terrible death, the sanguinary strifes of his own native city, all combined to inflame his "soul of fire" with a desire to take an active part in the destinies of his country. During the conflicts of the Guelfs of Florence, his party both by birth and conviction, and the Ghibellines of Arezzo, Dante proved his courage and military skill. In 1289 a battle was fought at Campaldino between the two parties. "In that great and memorable battle," says Leonardo Aretino,<sup>1</sup> "Dante, a youth of good report, was under arms, and exposed to great danger whilst fighting bravely in the first line of horse. The engagement began with an attack of cavalry, in which the Florentines were routed by the impetuous charge of their opponents, and fell back in disorder on the infantry. This, however, eventually caused the defeat of the Aretins, for their victorious horse, in the heat of the pursuit, left their infantry so far in rear, that they could never again combine forces." Campaldino furnishes the subject for a beautiful episode in the *Divina Commedia*.<sup>2</sup> The poet also marched against Pisa with the Lucchesi, to whom Florence had sent a contingent of some thousand auxiliaries, including four hundred horse. The Pisan fortress of Caprona surrendered after an eight days' siege, and the cowardice of the garrison left a deep impression upon Dante's memory :

"Thus issuing from Caprona, once I saw  
The infantry, dreading lest his covenant  
The foe should break, so close he hemm'd them round."

—*Hell*, xxi. 92.

From this date began Dante's political career. Provoked by the arrogance of the nobles, the people in 1293,

<sup>1</sup> *Vita di Dante*, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* v. 90.

under the leadership of Giano della Bella, passed the so-called "decrees of justice," which excluded the nobles from municipal offices. Peace was concluded with Pisa and Lucca, and thus security was restored, but only for a time. Corso Donati, the turbulent and haughty chief of the Guelfs, succeeded by artifice and calumny in procuring the condemnation of the popular leader Giano della Bella. His house was burnt, and Giano himself driven into exile. But Corso's attempt to reinstate the nobles in their ancient privileges was frustrated by the opposition and menacing attitude of the people. Many of the nobles, abandoning all hope of overthrowing the power of the people, suffered their names to be inscribed in the popular guilds. Among these was Dante. In 1295 he was enrolled in the Guild of Physicians and Apothecaries, for which he was well qualified by his scientific education. He now began to take an active part in the administration of his native city, and his biographer Leonardo briefly informs us "that he was much employed in the service of the Republic."

In 1300 Dante rose to the head of affairs as one of the six Priors who were annually chosen for the government of Florence. Each of the six exercised his office in turn for two months. But fresh dissensions arose to which Dante was eventually sacrificed. The contest between the Bianchi, so called from Bianca, wife of one of the Cancellieri, and the Neri, had spread from Pistoja to Florence. The Donati became the leaders of the Neri, whilst the Cerchi, who belonged to the new nobility, sided with the Bianchi. In June 1300, Boniface VIII. sent Cardinal Matteo d'Aquasparta to Florence with instructions to negotiate peace. His mediation was, however, rejected, and the leaders of both parties were banished, although, with the exception of Corso Donati, they were ultimately recalled. Charles of Valois now entered Italy with five hundred horse, to proclaim peace in the name of the Pope. Where-

upon the Florentines sent an embassy, of which Dante formed part, to Boniface VIII. at Rome, to protest against the French interference. It was then, according to Boccaccio, that the poet uttered the proud boast, "If I go, who will remain behind? If I stay, who will go?" During his sojourn in Rome Dante's fate was decided at Florence. Corso Donati captured the city by force, threw open its gates to Valois and his followers, and the Neri seized the reins of government. On the 27th of January 1302 Dante was condemned, with three other leaders of the Bianchi. "In order that they should reap what they had sown, and receive the just award of their deeds," each was condemned to a fine of eight thousand pounds, and, as traitors and deceivers, they were for ever excluded from all offices of state. On the 10th of March in the same year it was further enacted, as the fine had not been paid, that, if taken, all three should be burnt alive. This was a mere pretext to ensure their perpetual banishment from Florence, for the houses of the accused had been already demolished and their property confiscated. Moreover, Dante, being absent, was altogether ignorant of the former sentence against him. It is probable that Pope Boniface VIII. was cognisant of the designs of the Neri, and that he favoured their success, as the most powerful partisans of the Guelf cause; but he certainly took no part in the cruel proceedings which followed the entry of the French into Florence.

At Sienna, on his way back from Rome, Dante learnt his fate. The gates of his native city were for ever closed against him. His wife, Gemma Donati, with his five children, was still there. As a kinswoman of Corso Donati, she had saved some property, probably, according to Boccaccio, under pretext that it formed part of her dowry, and she remained in Florence, since her banished husband could no longer maintain her.

Dante's earnest efforts to avert French intervention, his

freedom from party spirit, which had led him to banish the leaders of both factions, and his upright character, had brought this fate upon him. But the exile was conscious of his innocence; therefore Brunetto Latini thus addresses him:—

“ But that ungrateful and malignant race,  
 Who in old times came down from Fesole,  
 Ay, and still smack of their rough mountain-flint,  
 Will for thy good deeds still show thee enmity.  
 Nor wonder; for amongst ill-savour'd crabs  
 It suits not the sweet fig-tree lay her fruit.  
 Old fame reports them in the world for blind,  
 Covetous, envious, proud. Look to it well:  
 Take heed thou cleanse thee of their ways. For thee,  
 Thy fortune hath such honour in reserve  
 That thou by either party shall be craved  
 With hunger keen: but be the fresh herb far  
 From the goat's tooth.”—*Hell*, xv. 61.

In the first book of his *Convito*<sup>1</sup> the poet thus describes the homeless and wandering life which he was henceforth to lead:—“ After it had pleased the citizens of that most fair and favoured daughter of Rome, Florence, to cast me forth from her sweet bosom, where I was brought up to the prime of life, and where, with all peace to her, I long with all my heart to rest my weary soul and finish the time allotted me, I have passed through almost all the regions to which this language extends, a wanderer, almost a beggar, displaying against my will the stroke of fortune, which is oftentimes wont unjustly to be imputed to the person stricken. Truly I have been a ship without sail or helm, carried about to divers harbours, gulfs and shores, by that parching wind which sad poverty breathes; and I have seemed vile in the eyes of many, who perchance, from some fame, had imagined of me in other form; in the sight of whom, not only did my

<sup>1</sup> *Convito*, i. 3.



presence become nought, but all work of mine less prized, both what had been and what was to be wrought." <sup>1</sup>

Yet the longing after his beloved Florence never died within him. Even in the very last years of his life he wrote these touching lines :

"If e'er the sacred poem, that hath made  
Both heaven and earth copartners in its toil,  
And with lean abstinence through many a year  
Faded my brow, be destined to prevail  
Over the cruelty, which bars me forth  
Of the fair sheepfold, where, a sleeping lamb,  
The wolves set on and fain had worried me;  
With other voice and fleece of other grain,  
I shall forthwith return, and, standing up  
At my baptismal font, shall claim the wreath  
Due to the poet's temples."—*Par.* xxv. 1.

Like Greece of old, Italy was the land of proscriptions. Among those who met with an exile's fate, Dante was one of the greatest. Misfortunes neither paralysed his energies nor damped his courage, but, on the contrary, gave strength to his character. Through exile he became great, and his noble nature shines brighter against the dark background of his ruined happiness. We cannot, however, deny that intense bitterness and profound indignation against his enemies characterised him throughout life, and found utterance in words which posterity may excuse, but can never justify.

The Bianchi and their confederates the Ghibellines fled first to Sienna, but that city favoured the Guelfs, and its inconstancy was proverbial :

"Was ever race  
Light as Sienna's? Sure not France herself  
Can show a tribe so frivolous and vain."

—*Hell*, xxix. 117.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Church, *Dante*, p. 76.

Hence their stay there was brief. We find them shortly after at Arezzo, and Dante with them. Again they were driven by the unfriendly attitude of the podestà, Uguccione della Faggiuola, to take refuge at Forlì. Here Scarpetta degli Ordelaffi received them kindly, and placed himself at their head that he might restore them to Florence by force of arms; but they were defeated at Pulicciano by the Neri. Thus Dante's hopes were disappointed. For the second time, the confederates undertook to attack Florence, in conjunction with the powerful cities of Bologna, Pisa, and Pistoja. Treachery and intrigue, however, combined to frustrate the enterprise. A third attempt was made by the advice of Cardinal Nicholas del Prato, whose mediation the Neri had rejected. The confederates had already advanced into the Piazza San Marco at Florence, when again the undertaking was brought to nought by their dissensions and rashness.

Commentators find an allusion to these events, which happened in 1304, in the following bitter lines :

" But that shall gall thee most,  
Will be the worthless and vile company,  
With whom thou must be thrown into these straits.  
For all ungrateful, impious all, and mad,  
Shall turn against thee : but in a little while,  
Theirs, and not thine, shall be the crimson'd brow."

—*Par.* xvii. 60.

Now began the poet's homeless wanderings, predicted by his ancestor Cacciaguida :<sup>1</sup>

"Thou shalt prove  
How salt the savour is of others' bread,  
How hard the passage, to descend and climb  
By others' stairs."—*Par.* xvii. 57.

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<sup>1</sup> [Cacciaguida, a Florentine knight, the first of Dante's ancestors of whom anything certain is known. He was born about 1090, and died fighting under Conrad III.—C.]

For eighteen years Dante had borne an exile's lot; he was now a poor man, *povero asset*, as Leonardo Aretino declares, although the scion of an eminent and honourable family, and allied by marriage to one of the most distinguished houses of Florence. That the *Divina Commedia*, the highest creation of his genius, should have been the work of this very period of his life is a striking proof of Dante's moral and intellectual greatness. It is probable that he went first to Bologna, then to Padua, where his name appears in 1306 as witness to a contract. During the same year we find him in Lunigiana, in the north of Tuscany, as the guest of the Marquis Malaspina,<sup>1</sup> one of his intimate friends. Meanwhile the Bianchi had again taken up arms against Florence. Dante himself took part in one of the assemblies convened for this purpose. But once more the discord which prevailed among the confederates proved fatal to their success. From this time the poet separated himself from his party and became "a party by himself alone." All had changed; he alone remained the same, and never ceased to pursue his end, the deliverance of Italy and of the human race. He now withdrew wholly into himself, and what, as an exile, was beyond his power by act, he strove to effect by his words. And those words, like a prophet's, have through centuries aroused his nation to noble deeds.

It is probable that the poet found at the court of Malaspina his friend Cino di Pistoja, who had also been banished from Pistoja with the Bianchi in 1307. Cino repaired to France in 1309, whither, according to Boccaccio, Giovanni da Serravalle, G. Villani, and Dante also went about this time.<sup>2</sup> On his way through Liguria, Dante is

<sup>1</sup> [As Marcello Malaspina had been Dante's political opponent, his hospitality is the more generous. His wife, Alagia, is praised by the poet in *Purg.* xix. 140.—C.]

<sup>2</sup> Other writers place Dante's journey to Paris before the time of his banishment.

said to have confided to the care of Hilarius, the Prior of Santa Croce del Corvo, Uguccione's brother, the first part of the *Divina Commedia*, which he had just completed, with the request that Hilarius would transmit it to Uguccione della Faggiuola. A letter from Hilarius to Uguccione, which mentions this transaction, is still extant, though its authenticity has been called in question. When asked by the Prior what he sought with him, Dante is said to have answered, "Peace."

In the year 1310 we find Dante again in Italy. Henry, Count of Luxemburg, had been elected Emperor of Germany in 1308. In him Dante saw a second Moses, destined to save Italy. Therefore he writes as "the humble and unjustly banished Italian, Dante of Florence, to the prince and lord of Italy," and, in terms of what we must call exaggerated homage and praise, implored the Emperor to redeem his country. Since the Hohenstaufens, Italy had been without an Emperor, and in this fact Dante saw the cause of all her misery :

"Look how that beast to felness hath relapsed,  
From having lost correction of the spur,  
Since to the bridle thou hast set thine hand,  
O German Albert!<sup>1</sup> who abandon'st her,  
That is grown savage and unmanageable  
When thou should'st clasp her flanks with forked heels.

Come, and behold the oppression of the nobles,  
And mark their injuries, and thou mayest see  
What safety Santafore<sup>2</sup> can supply.  
Come and behold thy Rome, who calls on thee,  
Desolate widow, day and night with moans,  
My Cæsar, why dost thou desert my side?"

—*Purg.* vi. 95.

<sup>1</sup> [The Emperor, Albert I., the predecessor of Henry of Luxemburg, succeeded Adolphus in 1298, and was murdered in 1308.—C.]

<sup>2</sup> [A place between Pisa and Sienna. The Count of Santafore had been murdered by his countrymen on account of his arrogance. See *Purg.* xi. 58.—C.]

By this time the state of Italy had become intolerable. Party strife, bloodshed, crime and anarchy prevailed throughout the peninsula from the Alps to the borders of Naples. The free republics were distracted by continual revolutions, whilst the feudal lords tyrannised over their subjects, and were always in arms against each other and against the people. Whereas Italy for ages past had resented as invasions all former descents of the Northmen upon Rome, Dante saw in the German kings of the Romans the divinely-appointed deliverers of Italy, whose sacred duty it was to re-establish the empire on this side of the Alps.<sup>1</sup> His ideal of a world-wide monarchy, which should restore peace and unity to his country and to Christendom, was a persistent idea of the Middle Ages, and found in him its most gifted and enthusiastic advocate. Even in the twelfth century the royal chronicles of Germany regarded Italians and Germans, not as enemies or opponents, but as brethren.<sup>2</sup> It is not then strange that a patriot like Dante should call upon the Emperor to create an united Italy even by force of arms. "I saw thee," writes the poet to Henry, "and I heard thy words of clemency and kindness on that day, when my hands touched thy feet and my lips rendered thee homage. Then my soul rejoiced within me. . . . Up, then, overthrow this Goliath (Florence) with the sling of thy wisdom and the stone of thy might; the Philistines shall flee and Israel shall be delivered." The lofty position which he assigns to the

<sup>1</sup> Gregorovius, *Geschichte der Stadt im Mittelalter*, vi. 19. "Among the various forms of government which come before us in the history of Italy, that of the Emperor was undoubtedly the best suited to its needs. It preserved the unity of the country as a whole, without destroying the individuality of its various states, and defended it from without, while it preserved order within. The fact that the title of the German ruler was Cæsar, and that he could only be crowned Cæsar at Rome, made him less of a foreigner in the eyes of the Italians, and his rule less derogatory to the national pride." Cf. T. Fischer, *Das deutsche Kaiserreich*, p. 84, 1861.

<sup>2</sup> Höfler, *Kaiserthum und Papsthum*, p. 19, 1874.

Emperor on account of his divinely instituted authority makes Dante seek for a parallel to the crime of rebellion against him in the sin of Judas, or even of Lucifer himself.

No sooner was Henry invested with the iron crown on January 6, 1311, than the Lombard cities, exasperated by his exactions, rose in arms against him. Lodi, Crema, Cremona, and Brescia threw off their allegiance, and were only subdued after sanguinary conflicts. Henry was crowned in the Lateran, but finding himself unequal to the defence of Rome, retreated to Pisa. The hardships of the campaign, the fever-laden atmosphere, the disappointments he met with, had combined to undermine his health. He died at Buonconvento, near Sienna, on the 24th of August, 1313. Florence had not been conquered; her gates still remained barred against the poet, who had repeatedly exhorted her to promise fealty to the Emperor. To his ideal Emperor Dante dedicated a dirge in his *Paradise*, in which he beholds the crown destined for the soul of the "Great Harry"<sup>1</sup> laid upon his throne in heaven:

"In that proud stall,  
On which, the crown, already o'er its state  
Suspended, holds thine eyes—or e'er thyself  
Mayst at the wedding sup,—shall rest the soul  
Of the great Harry, he who, by the world  
Augustus hail'd, to Italy must come,  
Before her day be ripe."—*Par.* xxx. 131.

After the Emperor's death, Ugucione della Faggiuola, formerly podestà of Arezzo, became governor of Pisa and conquered Lucca. With him we find Dante in the year 1314. It is probable that he had previously sojourned for a time at Santa Croce di Fonte Avellana, a Camaldolese

<sup>1</sup> ["Henry of Luxemburg was wise, just, and gracious, brave and intrepid in arms, a man of honour, and a good Catholic; and though of no high descent, yet was he of a magnanimous heart, much feared and held in awe; and, if he had lived longer, would have done the greatest things."—*Villani*, lib. ix. cap. l.—C.]

monastery, situated in the north of the Apennines. In 1315 Uguccione and his confederates won the battle of Montecatini against Florence. In consequence of this victory Dante was again condemned to banishment and death, and the sentence was also extended to his sons. But in 1316 both Lucca and Pisa revolted against Uguccione and forced him to fly. Thus deprived of his patron, Dante repaired first to his friend the younger Malaspina, in the Lunigiana, then to Can Grande della Scala at Verona, with whom Uguccione had already taken refuge.

Before these events the poet's hopes of his return to Florence had been revived, only in order to be more cruelly disappointed. All Tuscany, except Lucca, whose power was no longer a source of disquietude, had now become Ghibelline. Guido da Battifolle, Dante's friend, was governor of Florence. Shortly after, an amnesty was granted to the banished Florentines, certainly upon hard conditions. On the Feast of St. John Baptist, patron of the city, the amnestied citizens, bearing lighted tapers, followed in procession the picture of the Saint, to whom, upon payment of a fine, they were "presented." One of Dante's nephews and other friends urged him to accept this amnesty, whilst another of his kinsmen, a religious, undertook to act as mediator. But Dante refused to return to Florence upon terms so degrading. The greatness of his soul breathes in his reply. It runs thus: "I have received your letter with all due reverence and affection, and, after mature reflection, I acknowledge with gratitude that you have my return much at heart. I am the more beholden to you because a banished man has few friends. Should my answer be other than certain faint-hearted persons desire, do you, at least, I beseech you, weigh it carefully before you judge me. What I gather from your letters and those of my nephew and others is, that if I agree to submit to the fine and the disgrace of the 'offering,' I shall obtain pardon and may forthwith return

to Florence. To say the truth, Father, I find both conditions ludicrous, and especially ill-advised by those who have proposed them. For your letter, which is more sensible and considerate, does not even mention them. This, then, is the glorious recall which is to restore Dante to his country, after having endured an exile of almost fifteen years! Is this the reward of an innocence which is manifest? of the toil and fatigue of unremitting study? Far be from a man, conversant with philosophy, the baseness of heart to submit to be 'presented' in chains, like a Ciolo or other malefactors! Far be it from a preacher of justice to compromise injustice with money, and treat his persecutors as if they were his benefactors! No, Father; this is not the way in which I can return to my country. But should any other way be found, either by yourself or others, in course of time, which does not detract from Dante's fame and honour, I shall not hesitate to follow it. Should no such way be opened by which I may enter Florence, I will never enter it again. Why should I? Can I not everywhere enjoy the light of the sun and the stars? Can I not everywhere under heaven meditate upon the truths most dear to me, without first rendering myself inglorious, nay, infamous to the people and state of Florence? Bread at least will not fail me."<sup>2</sup> The letter was written in 1316 or early in 1317, and with this farewell the poet quitted Tuscany for ever.

Can Grande della Scala, surnamed the Great, after the deaths of his brothers Alboin and Bartolommeo,<sup>1</sup> became sole lord of Verona, viceroy of the Empire, and commander-in-chief of the Ghibelline league in Lombardy. Even as a young man his military fame had won for him a distinguished position. At his court both Guelf and Ghibelline

<sup>1</sup> Bartolommeo had accorded protection to the poet during the commencement of his exile.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Wright's *Dante*, p. xix.



found a hospitable welcome. To him Dante now looked as the deliverer of Italy, as, since the death of the Emperor, there was no hope of aid from Germany. In Can Grande he beheld him, who as

"That greyhound comes, who shall destroy  
Her<sup>1</sup> with sharp pain. He will not life support  
By earth nor its base metals, but by love,  
Wisdom, and virtue; and his land shall be  
The land 'twixt either Feltro."<sup>2</sup>—*Hell*, i. 98.

And again :

"First refuge thou must find, first place of rest  
In the great Lombard's courtesy, who bears,  
Upon the ladder perch'd, the sacred bird.<sup>3</sup>  
He shall behold thee with such kind regard  
That 'twixt ye two, the contrary to that  
Which falls 'twixt other men, the granting shall  
Forerun the asking. With him shalt thou see  
That mortal, who was at his birth imprest  
So strongly from this star,<sup>4</sup> that of his deeds  
The nations shall take note. His unripe age  
Yet holds him from observance, for these wheels  
Only nine years have compass him about.  
But ere the Gascon<sup>5</sup> practise on great Harry,  
Sparkles of virtue shall shoot forth in him,  
In equal scorn of labours and of gold.  
His bounty shall be spread abroad so widely,  
As not to let the tongues, e'en of his foes,  
Be idle in its praise. Look thou to him,

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<sup>1</sup> The vice of avarice, represented under the form of a she-wolf.

<sup>2</sup> [Verona, the country of Can Grande della Scala, is situated between Veltro, a city in the Marca Trevigiana and Monte Feltro, in the territory of Urbino. Perhaps allusion is also made to a prophecy, ascribed to Michael Scot, that the "Can (dog) of Verona should be lord of Padua and of all the Marca Trevigiana," which was fulfilled in 1329.—C.]

<sup>3</sup> [The Can Grande coat of arms was a ladder and an eagle.]

<sup>4</sup> [Can Grande was born under the influence of the planet Mars, but at this time only nine years old.—C.]

<sup>5</sup> [Richard de Got, Archbishop of Bordeaux. He became Pope under the title of Clement V. in 1305, and transferred the Holy See to Avignon in 1308. He died in 1314.—C.]

And his beneficence: for he shall cause  
 Reversal of their lot to many people;  
 Rich men and beggars interchanging fortunes."

—*Par.* xvii. 68.

After so many wanderings, as far as an exile can ever be said to have either, Dante found with Can Grande home and rest. His sons were now with him, and Pietro, the eldest, devoted himself to the study of law, and settled permanently at Verona. Dante's sojourn here lasted about four years, only broken by short visits to the neighbouring towns, and among others to Mantua. In this latter city he received an invitation to defend his thesis on "The two elements of land and water;" and accordingly, on January 20, 1320, he held a conference on the subject in St. Helen's Chapel at Verona, before the assembled clergy. Soon afterwards, Dante left Verona and settled at Ravenna. Some attribute his change of abode to a quarrel between the proud Lord of Verona and the poet, who also was fully conscious of his own value. Petrarch<sup>1</sup> relates that Dante had irritated his patron, to whose query, "why he himself and the people took more delight in actors and buffoons than in his conversation," the poet replied, "*Similis simili gaudet*"—"Like loves like." According to others, the difference was owing to an unseemly jest<sup>2</sup> which the parasites played off upon him. Dante's retort was a severe reproof, which hit his princely patron.<sup>3</sup> Others again assume that poverty, such as Dante confesses in his letter to Can Grande, drove him from Verona to Ravenna.

<sup>1</sup> *Rerum Memorab.* xi. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Cinzio Giral di, *Hecatombiti*, Dec. vii. nov. 6.

<sup>3</sup> They had concealed a boy under the table, who heaped together before Dante's seat all the bones thrown down by the guests, according to the custom of those times. As they rose from table, Can Grande, feigning surprise at the sight, exclaimed, "What a quantity of meat Dante consumes!" To which he replied, "Were I a dog (Cane), you would not find so many bones." Dante complains of the coarse tone which pervaded the courts of that period. *Convito*, ii. 11.

But these are mere surmises. We have Dante's own declaration in his letter to Can Grande that he is bound to him by sacred ties of friendship. Possibly the absence of Scaliger at the siege of Padua, or an invitation from Guido Novello da Polenta, Lord of Ravenna,<sup>1</sup> or both together, may have determined the poet to accept the hospitality of the latter. The peace of this city of ruins, the gloom of its pine forests on the shores of the ever-restless Adriatic, may well have harmonised with the weary pilgrim's frame of mind.

"At that time," says Boccaccio, "the ancient and renowned city of Ravenna was governed by Guido da Polenta, a noble knight, versed in all branches of science, who honoured great men, that is, those distinguished above others by their attainments. Now when he learnt Dante's desperate condition in the Romagna, he hastened to welcome him at his court with all due honour, amply providing for his wants, and maintained him during several years until his death." Yet Guido Novello was a Guelf, and Dante the inspired bard of the empire; the friendly relations, therefore, which united the two men, speak volumes for their nobility of soul.

Here Dante completed the third part of his *Divina Commedia*, dedicating it with a prefatory epistle to the "noble, victorious, and great Can della Scala." His sons Pietro and Giacompo came hither to him. Many of his friends were already dead—Beatrice, Guido Cavalcanti, Henry VII., Uguccione—and his own days were on the decline. More than ever his thoughts turned to the life eternal, whose mysteries he had glorified in the *Paradiso*. A poetical paraphrase containing the Penitential Psalms,

<sup>1</sup> [The son of Ostasio da Polenta, so called from a castle of that name near Brittonoro. Guido made himself master of Ravenna in 1265, was deposed in 1322, and died at Bologna the year following. He was himself a poet of name. Cf. *Hell*, xxvii. 38.]

the Credo, Ave Maria, Pater Noster, the Ten Commandments, and Seven Deadly Sins is ascribed to him.

Yet once more he was destined to be torn from his life of quiet contemplation. In order to negotiate an understanding between Verona and Venice, the poet undertook, in 1321, an embassy to the latter city. But his efforts were fruitless; he was not even admitted to an audience. No sooner had he returned to Ravenna than he was attacked by a grave malady. Boccaccio relates, that "after he had humbly and devoutly received all the last holy sacraments according to the rites of the Church, and had made his peace with God, he gave back his weary soul to his Creator on the 14th day of September, being the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, to the great grief of Guido and the people of Ravenna. All his earthly troubles ended, he was doubtless received into the arms of his noble Beatrice, with whom we trust he now enjoys everlasting bliss in the presence of Him Who is the Supreme Good." Dante had reached the age of fifty-six years and four months.

Thus died Dante. Measured by man's standard, he was unfortunate from his youth upwards. He lost his first love; his services to his country were ill-requited; he himself, accused of fraud and imposture, was condemned to be burnt; an exile, poor and homeless, he wandered in foreign lands. But he was never untrue to himself; he never lost faith in his ideal, nor was false to his principles; nor did he ever cease to love and to labour for his country, for science, for freedom and religion.

The body of the poet was solemnly interred in the Lady Chapel at the Friars Minor; it was borne to the grave by the noblest of Ravenna. Guido Novello himself pronounced the funeral oration in Dante's dwelling. He had proposed to erect a monument worthy of the poet's fame, but this design was frustrated by his banishment from

Ravenna in the following year. Dante's epitaph was written by Giovanni di Virgilio. The exasperation produced by the poet's attacks on the French party amongst the Cardinals (the "Cahorsines and Gascons") was nearly leading to a violation of his grave. In 1322 the imperious Cardinal Legate, Bertrand du Poyet, a "Cahorsine,"<sup>1</sup> then governor of the Romagna, threatened to break open Dante's tomb and scatter his ashes to the winds. Fortunately his plan was thwarted by Ostasio da Polenta, Lord of Ravenna. Dante's monument has been repeatedly adorned and rebuilt; by Bernardo Bembo, father of the celebrated Cardinal Bembo, in 1483; by the Cardinal Legate Domenico Corso in 1693; and again by the Cardinal Legate Valenti-Gonzago in 1780. In vain ungrateful Florence claimed the ashes of her great poet. The character of Dante has been well described both by Villani and Boccaccio. "This Dante," says Villani, "was proud of his learning, somewhat self-willed and morose. Like most philosophers, he was stern, nor did he readily converse with unlearned men. But it is due to his other virtues, to the erudition and ability of so eminent a citizen, that his memory should be immortalised in this chronicle, although the sublime works that he left behind, more than suffice to attest his merit, and redound to the glory of our city."

"Our poet," says Boccaccio, "was of middle stature, and in his advancing years stooped somewhat as he walked. His demeanour was grave and composed, his dress at that time simple and dignified, as became his age. His face was oval, his nose aquiline, his eyes large rather than small, his under-lip somewhat projecting; his complexion was dark, his beard and hair thick, black, and curly; his whole aspect was earnest and thoughtful. Now it happened, when the

<sup>1</sup> [Dante calls the French partisans "Cahorsines and Gascons" (*Par.* xxvii. 53), from Jacques d'Ossa, a native of Cahors, who filled the Papal chair in 1316, after it had been two years vacant, and assumed the name of John XXII., and from Clement V., a Gascon.—C. *in loc.*]

fame of his poem had spread far and wide, that Dante passed before a door in Verona where several women were sitting. One of them whispered softly, but loud enough for him to hear, 'See, this is he who descends into hell, and comes back again to bring tidings of those who are down below.' 'Indeed,' answered another, 'thou sayest truly; for dost thou not see how the heat and smoke below have crisped his hair and bronzed his cheeks.' Dante was remarkable for the order and regularity of his life in public and private, no less than for his courtesy and good-breeding. At table he was strictly temperate; he always kept within the appointed time, and never exceeded what was needful. Although he appreciated delicate viands, yet he seldom partook of them in preference to his usual simple fare. Indeed, he censured those who made the choice and preparation of dainties their chief concern; 'Such persons,' he said, 'do not eat to live, but live to eat.' In his studies and other affairs which he had at heart, none ever surpassed his diligence, so that his wife and family sometimes complained of this. He seldom spoke, unless called upon to do so, and then only after due reflection, and in a manner befitting the subject in hand. Yet, when requisite, he was eloquent and rapid in delivery, and his words were admirably chosen. He loved solitude and seclusion from society, in order that his meditations might be undisturbed. If engrossed by some absorbing subject whilst in company of others, he was wont first to think it out fully, or else to dismiss it altogether, before answering any question. This occurred not infrequently whilst he was at table, or walking out with his friends. So ardent a student was he, that during those hours which he devoted to study, he never suffered himself to be distracted by news brought him. Thus, on one occasion at Sienna, he sat down before a bookseller's shop to read an important work which he had just purchased, whilst before him, on the piazza, a fair was being held. The

dances and games of the youths and maidens had attracted a crowd of spectators. Amid the tumult of voices the poet remained quietly seated, without ever raising his eyes from his book. Thus he sat from none until the vesper hour; and when asked, why he kept aloof from the joyous festival before him, Dante replied, that he had heard nothing of it. He possessed a creative genius of the highest order, a retentive memory and a penetrating intellect. He was more solicitous of honours than became his undoubted merit, and had also a high estimate of his own worth. But this excellent man bore all his adverse fortunes with true fortitude, nor did he ever yield to impatience or bitterness, except in his political trials."

In his immortal work the poet has portrayed his own character for all posterity. He is bold, but restrained by duty;<sup>1</sup> proud,<sup>2</sup> but frank and without dissimulation; passionate and implacable in his hatred of evil,<sup>3</sup> but scorning all mean revenge;<sup>4</sup> in his speech, thoughtful, convincing, and truthful.<sup>5</sup> Although he smiles at the follies of mankind, yet he mourns over the sufferings which they entail.<sup>6</sup> He respects all authority,<sup>7</sup> and is full of reverence for the Church.<sup>8</sup> He craves pardon for the boldness of his speech, although its sole aim is the public good. Flattery he abhors,<sup>9</sup> and admires constancy in suffering, even when found among the lost souls.<sup>10</sup> Unwearied in study,<sup>11</sup> he despises riches, and whilst ambitious of fame, is ever ready to acknowledge his faults.<sup>12</sup> Despising the caprices of fortune, he is calm amid adversity.<sup>13</sup> He delights in enlarging his knowledge of men and things, although he

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* xvii. 23.<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* xiii. 126.<sup>3</sup> *Hell.* viii. 42.<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* xx. 86.<sup>5</sup> *Purg.* ii. 8.<sup>6</sup> *Hell.* xxx. 129.<sup>7</sup> *Purg.* ii. 39.<sup>8</sup> *Par.* v. 76; *Hell.* xix. 18.<sup>9</sup> *Hell.* xviii. 100.<sup>10</sup> *Hell.* xviii. 82.<sup>11</sup> *Purg.* xxv. 4, xxix. 38, xxxi. 141.<sup>12</sup> *Hell.* ii. 107; *Purg.* i. 59, ix. 98, xxx. 109.<sup>13</sup> *Hell.* xv. 94.

values old friends beyond all others.<sup>1</sup> Everywhere he searches out all that is great and elevated in human nature, and does it homage; he fears nothing so much as the censure of noble minds.<sup>2</sup> He esteems a dignified demeanour in voice, look, and manner.<sup>3</sup> To his native city<sup>4</sup> he clings with an unchangeable affection, which no wrongs can efface; to his friends he is bound by faithful love,<sup>5</sup> to his benefactors by undying gratitude.<sup>6</sup> As a pious Catholic,<sup>7</sup> he constantly meditates upon death;<sup>8</sup> he is fervent in prayer,<sup>9</sup> and is devout to the ever-blessed Virgin, St. Lucy, and the Saints.<sup>10</sup>

Such was Dante. As Balbo describes him, he was essentially Italian of the Italians beyond all his countrymen. Throughout his poetry the name of Italy recurs, as the supreme earthly object of his aspirations and of his love. The characteristic of his life was faith in an ideal system of the world based upon Christianity, and deriving from Christianity its significance, its aims, and its motives. Every trial leads him to God as the one Omnipresent Being, the primal cause of all things, and their last end; and until his death he remained true to this ideal, whose light transfigures all he loves—Beatrice, his country, freedom, and humanity. Hence his deep reverence for truth, which he never bartered for temporal interests. Hence his first principle, that he who seeks knowledge for worldly gain has no claim to be called a philosopher. In fine, his manly

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* ii. 85.

<sup>2</sup> *Hell*, xxx. 133.

<sup>3</sup> *Hell*, xxiii. 73, iv. 107; *Purg.* iii. 11, iii. 85.

<sup>4</sup> *Par.* xv. 92, xvi. 23.

<sup>5</sup> *Par.* viii. 48.

<sup>6</sup> *Par.* xvii. 84, iv. 116.

<sup>7</sup> *Par.* xxvi. 54, xxv. 46-79, xxiv. 47; *De Monarch.* iii. 3; *Convito*, ii. 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Hell*, xxxi. 100; *Purg.* xxiv. 75.

<sup>9</sup> *Par.* xxxi. 87, ii. 28, xiv. 81, xx. 101, xxxii. 134.

<sup>10</sup> *Conv.* iii. 5; *Hell*, ii. 97; *Par.* xxiii. 85; *Purg. passim*; *Vita Nuova*, § 5.



undaunted courage, his steadfast diligence in his work, his untiring zeal, his certainty of success, all spring from the fact, that he views earthly events in the light of eternity, and trusts in the power and wisdom of Him who controls the destinies of nations.

Yet Dante was human. The portrait of himself, which he has drawn in his works, reveals two dark shadows—pride and anger. But he atones for these faults by his humble self-accusation :

“ Mine eyes, said I,<sup>1</sup>  
May yet be here ta'en from me ; but not long,  
For they have not offended grievously  
With envious glances. But the woe beneath<sup>2</sup>  
Urges my soul with more exceeding dread ;  
That nether load already weighs me down.”

—*Purg.* xiii. 123.

From this and other passages, especially from his penitent confession before Beatrice (*Purg.* xxxi. 62), we joyfully arrive at the conviction, that the poet had first traversed in his own soul, the journey which he describes through Hell and Purgatory, and had thus risen from hatred of sin to penance, to the love of God and to happiness in Him.

The half-length portrait of Dante, painted by Giotto in the Chapel of the Podestà at Florence, fully answers to the character which he has sketched of himself in his writings. The countenance is that of a young man in his thirtieth year ; the expression of the features full of deep melancholy, as if foreshadowing his hard fate. A bust of Dante, from a cast taken after death, is in the possession of the Torrigiani family ; both this and the two likenesses of the poet by Raphael, in the “Parnassus” and the “Disputa,” bear the same unmistakable impress of a mighty genius.

Dante's earliest poems were in the lyric form. Several

<sup>1</sup> In the second Cornice, the prison of the envious.

<sup>2</sup> Where the proud were punished.

of these compositions are collected together in his *Vita Nuova* ("New Life"<sup>1</sup>), a youthful work of the poet, written whilst he was still at Florence, and dedicated to his elder friend, Guido Cavalcanti, who died in 1300. The *Vita Nuova* is the record of the new life, which was awakened in him by his meeting with Beatrice, and his ideal love of her. It consists of lyrical pieces, sonnets, ballads, and songs, interspersed with prose; partly narrations of those incidents in his life which inspired his poetry, partly explanatory of them. Here Dante already proves himself a master in the use of his mother tongue. His prose is clear, pure, and vigorous; his lyrics are characterised by genuine and deep feeling, lofty conceptions of life and of the world, by chaste and spiritualised affections, as well as by the religious tone which pervades the whole. In these his lesser poems, the musical rhythm, the wealth of noble ideas, his powerful and original imagination, presage the future author of the *Divina Commedia*.

The *Convito*, "Banquet," a name probably suggested by Plato's *Symposium*, resembles the *Vita Nuova* in its external form. Here also a prose commentary accompanies the poetry which it illustrates. The *Convito* is divided into four books, but was never completed. The plan of the work was that of an encyclopædia, embracing the whole range of contemporary science, and written in the vulgar tongue, to bring it within reach of unlettered persons. Thus he says in the introduction:<sup>2</sup> "O happy those few who sit at the table where the bread of angels is eaten, and miserable those who partake of food in common with beasts. Yet since each man is by nature the friend of his fellow, and as every friend laments over his friend's need, therefore those who feast at so high a table are not without pity towards those, whom they behold straying in the

<sup>1</sup> According to Fraticelli, "youth," or "young life."

<sup>2</sup> *Convito*, i. 1.

pastures of cattle and feeding upon grass and acorns. And inasmuch as pity is the mother of charity, those who possess knowledge are ever ready to share their glorious abundance with the truly poor, and thus they become the living fountains through whose streams the natural thirst of which we have spoken is quenched.<sup>1</sup> . . . Therefore I now propose to prepare . . . a feast for all. The viands at this banquet will be set out in fourteen different manners, that is, will consist of fourteen canzoni, the materials of which are love and virtue. Without the bread that accompanies them, they would not be free from some shade of obscurity; but the bread, that is, the explanation, will be that light which will bring forth all their colours, and display their full meaning to the view."<sup>2</sup>

The three canzoni, to whose interpretation the work is devoted, date from about 1300, whilst the prose commentary may be assigned to a period subsequent to Dante's banishment, probably about 1309. We look in vain for any classification of the immense learning here displayed, since the whole work is subordinated to the several allegorical meanings of each canzone. The different parts have no systematic connection, and questions on the most diverse sciences are intermixed. But the *Convito* shows us some of the raw material eventually developed in the *Divina Commedia*, and gives much valuable information as to its purport. It is Dante's special merit that his enthusiastic love of his country led the poet to write in the vulgar tongue, in preference to the stiff scholastic language, till then universally employed.<sup>3</sup> "For without

<sup>1</sup> "The natural thirst, ne'er quench'd but from the well  
Whereof the woman of Samaria craved."—*Purg.* xxi. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Cary's *Dante*, p. xxx.

<sup>3</sup> The *Inferno* was originally begun in Latin. The opening was as follows:—

"Ultima regna canam fluido contermina mundo  
Spiritus quæ lata patent, quæ præmia solvunt  
Pro meritis cuicunque suis."—*Boccaccio*, p. 32, ed. Nap. 1856.

familiar intercourse," he says, "it is impossible to gain the knowledge of men, and the Latinist can in no country hold converse with so many persons as he who speaks the vulgar tongue, which is used familiarly by all, and therefore to the masses the Latinist remains a stranger."<sup>1</sup>

In the *Convito*, science for the first time speaks the language of the people, but is still religious. It descends into the arena of common life, whilst maintaining the closest union with the Church. The daring intellect of the poet handles the most difficult problems, but within the depths of his soul he guards his humble faith. The philosophy of the "heavenly Athens" is the goal to which all his learning tends, in faith, hope, and love.<sup>2</sup>

Dante had already declared in the *Convito* his intention, with the Divine assistance, of producing a work upon the vulgar tongue. This he fulfilled in the treatise entitled *De Vulgari Eloquentia*. Written during his exile, and most probably simultaneously with the *Convito*, it remains unfinished. Out of the four books which the author purposed to write, two only were composed. Dante was the first to treat of this subject; he wrote in Latin, in order that his book might be accessible to the learned, who despised the vulgar tongue. He draws this distinction between popular and grammatical languages—that the former are learnt in the nursery independently of all rules, the latter only after long and persevering diligence. This dissertation is prefaced by an inquiry into the common origin of language. He next proceeds to speak of the Romance languages in general, and of Italian and its different dialects in particular; of poetry in its various forms, and of the vernacular vulgar tongue through which it finds expression. It was Dante's intention to discuss these questions more fully in the third and fourth books. It is true that many of his propositions are untenable;

<sup>1</sup> *Convito*, l. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, iii. 14.

notably, those which he afterwards retracted relating to the origin of language, those on the formation of the Romance languages, and on the importance of the Tuscan dialect in the formation of Italian. Still the work is one of considerable value, because through it, and especially in its connection with his great poem, Dante thus early created for his people a common language, which has remained without essential change to the present day.<sup>1</sup>

8) According to Boccaccio, Dante's *De Monarchia* owes its origin to the Emperor Henry VII.'s expedition against Rome, and was probably written within the year 1312; but according to De Witte, it was compiled before 1300. In regard to the historical and political views of its author, the *De Monarchia* is Dante's most important work. It contains the programme of the Ghibellines, set forth by the most moderate of their party; by one who does not even wish to be numbered among them, and it shows to what extravagances some of their extreme partisans were carried. The treatise is divided into three books; in the first, Dante maintains the need of an universal empire; in the second, he contends that this empire is the inalienable right of the Roman people; in the third, that it is immediately dependent upon God. We shall examine its contents more closely when we consider Dante's political theory.

Fourteen letters ascribed to Dante have been discovered; one of them, however, appears to be spurious. They are written chiefly in Latin. The following are among the most important: The epistle of dedication to Can Grande della Scala, often quoted, which contains a prefatory explanation of the *Divina Commedia*; the letters to the Emperor Henry VII., to the princes of Italy and the Florentines,

<sup>1</sup> So Thomas (in *Aristot. Politic.*, ed. Parm., tom. xvi. p. 369) distinguishes between cultivated and barbarous races, in that, with the former, the vulgar tongue is also a written language (*habere literalem locutionem in suo vulgari idiomate*).

and the letter to a friend in Florence already mentioned, in which the poet refuses the proposed amnesty. Dante also wrote two Eclogues, addressed to Giovanni di Virgilio.

The treatise *De Duobus Elementis Aquæ et Terræ*, to which we have already referred, is an inquiry into the position and form of the two elements, earth and water. It concludes with an avowal of the insufficiency of all human learning. "Men must cease to search into things which are above them, and limit their inquiry to those within their reach. Thus they will attain, as far as may be, to the eternal and divine, and will not presume to inquire into what they cannot comprehend. They should listen to the words of Job: 'Wilt thou comprehend the ways of God, and wilt thou find out the perfection of the Almighty?' (Job xi. 7.) To the Psalmist: 'Thy knowledge is become wonderful to me; it is high, and I cannot reach to it' (Ps. cxxxviii. 6). To Isaiah, who declares, in the name of God: 'As the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are My ways exalted above your ways' (Isa. lv. 9). To St. Paul: 'O the depth of the riches of the wisdom of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!' (Rom. xi. 33.) Lastly, they must listen to the voice of the Creator Himself, who says, 'You shall seek Me, and shall not find Me, and where I am, thither you cannot come' (St. John vii. 34.) And let this suffice for the inquiry into the truth before us."

A poetical paraphrase of the Seven Penitential Psalms, the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Seven Deadly Sins, with the Pater Noster and Ave Maria, entitled the *Poet's Creed*, is attributed to Dante, but its authenticity is very doubtful. "These verses of Dante," says Balbo, "are certainly not his best, yet they are not at all unworthy of him. Perhaps they were written at an earlier period of his life."<sup>1</sup> Questionable as is the authen-

<sup>1</sup> *Vita di Dante*, p. 420.

ticity of these verses, still less reliance can be placed on the story that Dante composed them to prove his orthodoxy, and thus escape from the persecutions which he had suffered at the hands of the Friars Minor. "There are some who are determined, at any price, to have an anti-christian Dante; therefore they make him say what is vile and false, and make him do so from fear."<sup>1</sup>

Each of Dante's works discovers for us a special aspect of his intellectual life. In the *Vita Nuova* we see the lyric poet; in the *Convito*, the philosopher; in the *De Vulgari Eloquio*, the philologist; in the *De Monarchia*, the statesman; in his *Confession of Faith*, the Christian. But in the *Divina Commedia*, Dante is all these in one,—poet, scholar and politician, man and Christian.

<sup>1</sup> *Vita di Dante*, p. 420.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE IDEA AND FORM OF THE "DIVINA COMMEDIA."

"THE Cathedral of Strasburg had stood for centuries in all its majesty," writes Steffens, "yet men passed by and saw it not." At length Goethe discovered its beauties, as it were afresh, and called attention to them. In like manner, Dante's poem remained almost a closed book to successive generations, which were alike incapable of comprehending its symbolism or of admiring its external beauty.<sup>1</sup> During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Italy itself produced only one commentary on the *Divina Commedia*, whilst from 1629 to 1716 no new edition was issued. Such a state of things is happily of the past. From 1806 to 1868, two hundred and thirty-eight editions besides several commentaries have been published.

The cause of this indifference in the past is not hard to understand. Italians, who delighted in Petrarch's amatory sonnets, in soft arcadian measures, and *jejune* pastoral idylls, could care but little for the manly and thoughtful verse of one whom posterity has rightly named "the philosopher of poets and the poet of philosophers." Nor was the literary taste in France, Germany, and England of a higher stamp. Voltaire, who was regarded as the supreme critic of his time, termed Shakespeare "a drunken

K/ <sup>1</sup> A. Witte, *Dante-Forschungen*, 1869, p. 10. See also *Bibliographia Dantesca*, compiled by Viscount Colomb de Batines, Florence, 1847; and Ferrazzi, *Manuale Dantesco*, Bassano, 1865-71.



savage;" and his opinion of Dante was scarcely more favourable. He sees in the *Divina Commedia* "a bizarre work, sparkling indeed with natural beauties, but in which the author only occasionally rises above the bad taste of his time and of his subject."<sup>1</sup> Even Lamartine only saw in Dante "*un poète personnel et local.*"<sup>2</sup> Among Germans, Bouterweck is conspicuous in his adverse criticism of the poem.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, the judgment pronounced on the *Divina Commedia* by Huber does not exceed the just meed of praise. "There is no single poem," he says, "in the whole range of human compositions which for importance of subject, elevation of thought, earnestness of conviction, or corresponding perfection of execution, can bear comparison with Dante's great epic." With his eye fixed on the spiritual side of creation, Dante shows us the age in which he lived, in the light of divine grace and justice, and in so doing holds up the mirror for all time; and thus viewed, nothing stands by itself. What seems most individual and transitory finds its counterpart, with wondrous harmony, in the universal and eternal. The former is indeed but the type of the latter, and the most sublime ideas are brought before us in living forms, clothed in plastic fulness. In no mere shadowy outlines does Dante trace for us the other world. His *Hell* does not fade into Homer's chimerean mists, nor does his *Paradiso* dissolve into Klopstock's "veil woven of rays of primeval light;" but hell and heaven stand before us in outlines solid, bold, and incisive.

Here a second point should be considered. The earliest poetry of other modern nations was often of a purely

<sup>1</sup> *Essai sur les Mœurs.*

<sup>2</sup> *Le Siècle*, Dec. 10, 1857. Chateaubriand also calls the *Commedia* "une production bizarre" (*Génie du Christianisme*, ii. 2).

<sup>3</sup> F. Bouterweck, *Geschichte der Poesie und Beredsamkeit seit dem Ende des 13. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen, 1801, vol. i. p. 95.

secular character, and not unfrequently distinctly irreligious.<sup>1</sup> Italian poetry, on the contrary, was from the first thoroughly Christian. St. Francis of Assisi's *Canticle of the Sun*<sup>2</sup> struck the first note of poetry in the mother tongue, and was the prelude to the *Commedia*. Other poets, like Klopstock and Milton, have chosen Christian themes; but, apart from the fact that they wrote much less, of the Christian idea as a complete system which governs and sanctifies every sphere of human action, they had no notion. They knew nothing—and this is most important—of positive dogma, as promulgated by the Church and accepted by the consciences of the faithful. Its description was, therefore, utterly beyond them. Dante, on the contrary, is the poet of the Christian and Catholic conception of the universe. Catholic dogma is the divine light which inspired his mighty genius and illuminated the three kingdoms of Hell, Purgatory and Paradise.

Now Catholic dogma, which was at first conveyed in the form of popular instruction, and deposited, often only in the germ, in Scripture and tradition, had been for more than a thousand years before Dante's time the study of the Fathers and teachers of the Church, from Athanasius and Augustine down to the poet's contemporaries, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, Hugo, and Richard of St. Victor. All that Greece and the West possessed of intellectual acumen and depth of thought, had been em-

<sup>1</sup> [Four of the first disciples of St. Francis were renowned as sacred poets. Pacificus, known in the world as the poet-king, was converted by St. Francis, and sanctified his art by setting to more exact rhythm the improvised canticles of the Saint. St. Bonaventure, the Seraphic Doctor, composed many hymns and paraphrased the Psalms in honour of Our Lady. Brother Giaconini of Verona was the author of two poems on Hell and Purgatory, which Dante may have read; and B. Jacopone of Todi wrote the *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*, the *Stabat Mater Gloriosa*, and many poems in Italian. As a penitent, poet and mystic, he was one of the most remarkable men of his age.]

<sup>2</sup> *Cantico de le Creature communiato detto de lo Frate Sole* is the title.

ployed in its investigation, confirmation, and development. This was due to the innate desire of making revealed dogmas more intelligible to the minds of men, the obligation, at times, of defending the faith against the assaults of heresy, and the need of finding adequate terms for the expression of divine mysteries. Thus, one by one, the stones were chiselled with which was raised, under the Church's guiding hand, the structure of Catholic theology, every part of which is firmly knit together, and built up into an organic and spiritual edifice. Viewed merely in its outward aspect, the theology of the Church stands like some grand cathedral, marvellous in the harmony of the whole, in the perfect proportion of its parts, and in the loving care evinced in the smallest details.

Dante, then, wrote as a theologian, as a "poetic Thomas Aquinas;" and we find that he makes that Saint introduce him into the circle of the twelve great doctors, who shine in the sun's firmament, and declare their place and significance in the science of theology:

"Thou fain would'st hear, what plants are these, that bloom  
In the bright garland, which admiring, girds  
This fair Dame round, who strengthens thee for heaven.  
I, then, was of the lambs that Dominic  
Leads, for his saintly flock, along the way  
Where well they thrive, not swoln with vanity.  
He, nearest on my right hand, brother was  
And master to me; Albert of Cologne  
Is this, and of Aquinum, Thomas I.  
If thou of all the rest would'st be assured,  
Let thine eye, waiting on the words I speak,  
In circuit journey round the blessed wreath."

—*Par. x. 88.*

Now the theology of St. Thomas<sup>1</sup> represented the result of the labours of past ages, and into its service all human and natural science had been pressed. The divine origin, mutual relation and special scope of the various sciences

<sup>1</sup> S. i. q. 2, a. 2.

are described by St. Bonaventure, another of Dante's teachers, in the following well-known passage:—

"From God, the Primal Light, all illumination in a fourfold ray descends. There are the *lower*, the *outer*, the *inner* and the *higher* lights. The *lower* light of sense, knowledge, illuminates us as to the natural form of corporeal objects, through our perceptions of sense, that is, through the lower side of our nature. The *outer* light of mechanical art, which illuminates us in respect to artificial forms, includes all productions and manufactures for man's bodily needs and comfort, and is thus distinguished from the *inner* light of philosophy, which illuminates man's soul within with regard to intelligible truth. Truth is threefold: (1.) Truth of language, or rational truth, expresses the conceptions of the mind, which is the function of grammar, or moves to belief, which is that of logic, or incites to love and hatred, which is the function of rhetoric. (2.) Truth of things, or natural truth, deals physically, with their generation and corruption in the order of nature; mathematically, with their abstract forms as our intellect conceives them; metaphysically, with the primal ideas of all things as they exist in the mind of God, from whom they first proceed. (3.) The truth of morals refers to the whole range of duties, to the individual, or to those of the family, or of the state. The fourth or *higher* light illuminates in respect to those truths which dispose to salvation (*salutaris*). It leads to higher objects by manifesting those things which are above reason, and is found, not by human search, but by inspiration from the Father of Lights. All Holy Scripture has a triple sense: the first teaches us what we are to believe—the eternal generation and incarnation of Christ; the second teaches morals and gives us a rule to live by; the third shows us the end of both—the union of the soul with God. Doctors should toil diligently for the first, preachers for the second, contemplatives for the third."

St. Bonaventure then shows the analogy of these six different classes of knowledge with the six days of creation:

"Six in number are the illuminations in this life, and they fade at eventide, because all knowledge shall be destroyed, and to them succeeds the seventh day, the day of rest, the illumination of glory which never sets."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *De Reductione Artium ad Theologiam.*

According to the Schoolmen, then, all things earthly, every expression of human knowledge and art, are rays of light from God, the eternal truth and love. This is the foundation of Christian philosophy, and this forms the central idea of the *Commedia* :

"That which dies not,  
And that which can die, are but each the beam  
Of that idea which our Sovereign Sire  
Engendereth, loving; for that lively light  
Which passeth from His splendour, not disjoin'd  
From Him, nor from His love triune, with them,  
Doth, through His bounty, congregate itself,  
Mirror'd as 'twere in new existences,  
Itself unutterable, and ever one.  
Descending thence unto the lowest powers,<sup>1</sup>  
Its energy so sinks, at last it makes  
But brief contingencies; for so I name  
Things generated, which the heavenly orbs,  
Moving, with seed or without seed, produce.  
Their wax, and that which moulds it, differ much :  
And thence with lustre, more or less, it shows,  
The ideal stamp imprint."—*Par.* xiii. 51.

Thus Beatrice instructs the poet that

"Among themselves all things  
Have order, and from hence the form which makes  
The universe resemble God."—*Par.* i. 100.

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<sup>1</sup> "There is some first Being who is essentially *ens* and *bonum*, and this first Being we call God. All other things can be said to have being and good in so far as they partake of them from this first Being by a kind of similarity, though in a very remote and imperfect manner."—*S. i. q. 6, a. 4.* "The divine essence can be known, not only as it is in itself, but also as it is in creatures, according to the different degrees in which they share its likeness. Now as the species of each creature is determined by its degree of resemblance to the divine essence, so God, in knowing the exact manner in which His essence is imitable in the creature, knows also its proper nature, and has the idea of each creature present before Him."—*S. i. q. 15, a. 1.* "All creatures in this visible world lead the soul of the wise and contemplative man to the eternal God, inasmuch as they are the signs, the images, the show of that art which is at once the efficacious cause, the one exemplar, and the ordainer of all things."—*S. Bonav. Itinerar. Mentis ad Deum*, cap. 2.

To the spiritual soul, therefore, the order of this world is but a mirror of the Divine image :

"In this the higher creatures see the printed steps  
Of that eternal worth, which is the end  
Whither the line is drawn."<sup>1</sup>—*Par.* i. 102.

And for that hereafter every creature yearns; "all things transitory are but a type of the unending;" there all destinies end; the final decision is fixed, the veil drops. Thither, where alone is true life, all life gravitates :

"All natures lean  
In this their order, diversely, some more,  
Some less approaching to their primal source.  
Thus they to different havens are moved on  
Through the vast sea of being, and each one  
With instinct given, that bears it in its course.

Nor only creatures, void of intellect,  
Are aim'd at by this bow, but even those,  
That have intelligence and love are pierced.

And thither now, as to our seat  
Predestined, we are carried by the force  
Of that strong cord, that never loses dart  
But at fair aim and glad."<sup>2</sup>—*Par.* i. 105.

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<sup>1</sup> "Recognising, then, the Creator by means of those things which are created (Rom. i. 20), we ought also to understand the existence of a Trinity, of which every creature, as far as it is worthy to do so, bears the impress. For in this Trinity is the first origin of all things, perfect beauty, and blessed joy."—*S. Aug. de Trin.* lib. vi. "In all creatures is found impressed a likeness to the Trinity, in the sense that we find in every creature things which necessarily lead us to the Divine Persons as their cause. For every creature subsists in its individual being (*esse*), has a form which determines its species, and has relations to something else."—*S. i. q. 45, a. 7.*

<sup>2</sup> "God, Whom everything loves that is capable of loving, whether it has intelligence or not."—*S. Aug. Soliloq.* i. 1. St. Thomas's argument is that all things have a stronger natural inclination for that from which they proceed, or of which they form part, than for themselves. Thus the hand spontaneously meets a blow to preserve the body. And as

Man is impelled to attain to the sight of God by the thirst for knowledge which is implanted in his soul, and is the source even of his doubts. This desire is unquenchable, and urges him on step by step, till he gains the Eternal Truth :

" Well I discern, that by that truth alone  
Enlighten'd, beyond which no truth may roam,  
Our mind can satisfy her thirst to know ;  
Therein she resteth, e'en as in his lair  
The wild beast, soon as she hath reach'd that bound.  
And she hath power to reach it ; else desire  
Were given to no end. And thence doth doubt  
Spring, like a shoot, around the stock of truth ;  
And it is nature which, from height to height,  
On to the summit prompts us." <sup>1</sup>—*Par.* iv. 119.

As the desire for truth is part of our nature, so also is the craving for happiness. But since our knowledge is at first imperfect and the soul without experience and instruction, things of little worth appear to her great, and are the primary objects of her desires. Dante describes in words at once thoughtful and pathetic, and yet philosophically exact, the development of the will in man :

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reason imitates nature, a brave citizen exposes himself to death to save the state. He continues : " Since God Himself is the Universal Good, and under this good are contained the angels, man, and every creature, for every creature derives its nature from Him, it follows that *naturally* angels and man love God with a love prior to and greater than that they bear themselves."—*S. i. q. 60, a. 5.* " To love God above all things is in a certain way natural to man, and also to every creature, not only rational, but irrational, and even inanimate, according to the kind of love of which the creature is capable."—*S. i. 2. q. 109, a. 3.*

<sup>1</sup> From this desire of knowing the truth, Dante, with St. Thomas, deduces the possibility of knowing God, and even of seeing Him, though the latter can only be accomplished by the help of grace. " Man desires by nature to know the cause of the effects which he perceives, and it is this desire which begets wonder. If, then, the created intellect were unable to arrive at the First Cause of all things, a desire implanted by nature would remain for ever unsatisfied."—*S. i. q. 12, a. 1.* " The created intellect is enabled to see God, the divine essence, as He is, by a gift, not of nature, but of grace."—*S. i. q. 12, a. 4.*

"Forth from His plastic hand, who charm'd beholds  
 Her image ere she yet exist, the soul  
 Comes like a babe, that wantons sportively,  
 Weeping and laughing in its wayward moods,  
 As artless and as ignorant of aught  
 Save that her Maker, being One who dwells  
 With gladness ever, willingly she turns  
 To whate'er yields her joy. Of some slight good  
 The flavour<sup>1</sup> soon she tastes, and, snared by that,  
 With fondness she pursues it, if no guide  
 Recall, no rein direct her wandering course."

—*Purg.* xvi. 86.

Whatever seems desirable in creatures is so only because of their likeness to God, the Exemplar and the Source of all good. On earth the just apprehend Him as the Supreme Good by reason and faith, but the blessed in Paradise immediately, for they behold unveiled the holiness and perfection of the divine nature:

. . . . "In this palace is the weal,  
 That Alpha and Omega is, to all  
 The lessons love can read me.

. . . . .  
 Philosophy . . . . hath arguments,  
 And this place hath authority enough,  
 To imprint in me such love: for of constraint,  
 Good, inasmuch as we perceive the good,  
 Kindles our love; and in degree the more  
 As it comprises more of goodness in't.  
 The essence then, where such advantage is,  
 That each good, found without it, is nought else  
 But of His light the beam, must needs attract  
 The soul of each one, loving, who the truth  
 Discerns, on which this proof is built."<sup>2</sup>

—*Par.* xxvi. 19.

<sup>1</sup> *Convito*, iv. 12.

<sup>2</sup> "Everything that exists can be said to be good with a divine goodness, inasmuch as it proceeds from God, Who is the primal Exemplar, the efficient and the final Cause of all goodness, and in this sense goodness in all things is one."—S. i. q. 6, a. 4.



Thus when Eternal Truth, the Supreme Goodness, the Divine Beauty are disclosed to the poet, his strains cease :

" At this point, o'erpower'd, I fail ;  
Unequal to my theme, as never bard  
Of buskin or of sock hath fail'd before.

Not from that day, when on this earth I first  
Beheld her charms, up to that view of them,  
Have I with song applausive ever ceased  
To follow ; but now follow them no more ;  
My course here bounded, as each artist's is,  
When it doth touch the limit of his skill."<sup>1</sup>

—Par. xxx. 22.

Dante has undertaken to glorify, as none had before, the mystery of the Godhead. He knows the strange and arduous nature of his task, and exclaims, as he is about to enter Paradise :

" All ye, who in small bark have following sail'd,  
Eager to listen, on the adventurous track  
Of my proud keel, that singing cuts her way,  
Backward return with speed, and your own shores  
Revisit, nor put out to open sea,

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<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine defines the happiness of Heaven to consist in the vision, love, and enjoyment of God, corresponding to the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. The reason for this triple division is thus given by St. Thomas :—" *Delectatio* results from the repose which the appetite finds in a good possessed ; and since beatitude is nothing else than the possession of the sovereign good, it cannot exist without delight accompanies it."—S. i. 2. q. 3, a. 1. " *Delectatio* consists in a certain repose of the will, and it is the goodness alone of the object which can cause the will therein to find its rest."—*Ibid.* a. 2. "The perfect knowledge of the end corresponds to the imperfect knowledge (of faith), the presence of the end to the habit of hope ; but the delight in this presence results from love, as has been shown. . . . Hence the three essential constituents of beatitude are *visio*, which is the perfect knowledge of our intelligible end ; *comprehensio*, which implies the presence of that end ; *delectatio* or *fruition*, from which the repose of the loving soul in the object loved."—*Ibid.* a. 3.

includes

Where losing me, perchance ye may remain,  
Bewilder'd in deep maze. The way I pass,  
Ne'er yet was run."—*Par. ii. 1.*

Those only, he warns us, may venture to follow him, who have early renounced the fleeting life of the senses and consecrated themselves to the contemplation of heavenly things :

"Ye other few, who have outstretch'd the neck,  
Timely for food of angels, on which here  
They live, yet never know satiety ;  
Through the deep brine ye fearless may put out  
Your vessel ; marking well the furrow broad  
Before you in the wave, that on both sides  
Equal returns."—*Par. ii. 11.*

In these words Dante signifies the transcendent character of his work and its future destiny. A poem whose purpose is to solve the problems of the universe can only be understood after patient study. The eternal truths it contains are set forth in scholastic terms or in the language of Catholic mysticism, whilst the subject itself and its mode of treatment alike present to most readers almost insuperable difficulties. Dante, as his epitaph says, was a theologian, a master in dogmatic lore—"Theologus Dantes, nullius dogmatis expers." Many persons, after reading a few stanzas, come across passages which are either obscure or distasteful to modern refinement, and, losing patience, throw the book aside. Others are deterred from its perusal by the fact that the *Commedia* requires a greater intellectual effort than the current literature, the "*belles lettres* of the day ;" whilst others, again, attracted by the grandeur of its conception, the magic charm of its language, and its noble sentiments, have either interpreted its obscure passages in a rationalistic or unsound mystical sense, or have seen in it only an exposition of their own political views. If such a student of Dante as Frederic

Schlosser admits that he had read the *Divina Commedia* twelve times and could not grasp its meaning, allowance may easily be made for the various erroneous judgments passed upon the poem. The "vision" shares the fate of all masterpieces of art, whose beauties are hidden from the superficial observer, whilst to the earnest student they disclose ever new and unexpected perfections. "What treasures must not that poem possess," observes Witte, "whose strains fascinated alike the youthful Schelling at twenty-eight and the aged Schlosser at eighty-four!" It is not alone the passing gratification of the fancy, but the pure and sublime sentiments it evolves, which captivate ever more and more those who know it well. The best side of a man's inner life is stirred, the intellect is nourished by lofty thoughts, and, thus awakened to higher things, he finds that deep peace which religion combined with true philosophy can alone bestow.

The form of the poem is that of a vision, or rather a series of visions, vouchsafed to the poet in the threefold realms of the other world, and which he is to announce to his fellow-men :

"Conscience, dimm'd or by its own  
Or others' shame, will feel thy saying sharp.  
Thou, notwithstanding, all deceit removed,  
See the whole vision be made manifest."

—*Par.* xvii. 120.

Records of similar visions were by no means rare in Dante's age. Among them we may mention, in Germany, those of St. Mechtildis, sister of St. Gertrude, a contemporary of the poet, A.D. 1310; of St. Hildegarde, A.D. 1197; of St. Elizabeth of Schönau, A.D. 1162; in Sweden, those of St. Bridget, A.D. 1371; in Italy, the vision of the Benedictine monk Alberic of Monte Cassino, in the twelfth century; in France, *St. Paul's Descent into Hell*, an unedited poem of the eleventh century; in Ireland, *St.*

*Patrick's Purgatory*,<sup>1</sup> and the *Voyage of St. Brendan*, of which there is a later version of the eleventh century. Of an earlier date are those related by St. Boniface, A.D. 755; by Venerable Bede,<sup>2</sup> A.D. 735, and by St. Gregory the Great in the fourth book of his *Dialogues*. Most of these preceded the *Divina Commedia*. The Church, by her ritual, kept before the eyes of her children symbolical and mystical representations of the other world, and impressed them on their minds as living realities by the sculptures and paintings which were found everywhere, from the

<sup>1</sup> St. Patrick's Purgatory is the name given to a cave on an island of Lough Derg, co. Donegal, which cave, tradition said, had been declared by the Saint to be an entrance into the other world. In 1153 the Knight Owen, who had led a wild life in King Stephen's army, obtained leave to revisit his country, and passed a day and night in penance in St. Patrick's Cave. A poem of that century describes how during his confinement the knight passed through Hell, Purgatory and Heaven, and what befell him in each place. By the beginning of the thirteenth century *St. Patrick's Purgatory* had become famous throughout Europe. It was introduced into an Italian romance, *Guerrino detto il Merchino*, attributed to a Florentine, Andrea Patria, of the fourteenth century, and was dramatised by Calderon in the seventeenth. In the Patent Rolls of the Tower of London of the year 1358 are testimonials given by Edward III. to two nobles, an Hungarian and a Lombard, of their having faithfully performed the pilgrimage, and of their having passed a day and a night in the cave. In 1317, Raymond, Viscount of Perilhos, Knight of Rhodes, and Chamberlain to the King of France, with twenty men and thirty horses, obtained a safe-conduct from Richard II. to visit the cave, and on his return wrote a narrative of what he had seen. His experiences are similar to those of Sir Owen. See Wright's *St. Patrick's Purgatory*, a book of considerable research, but disfigured by the virulent and ignorant bigotry it displays.

<sup>2</sup> The Vision of St. Fursey, A.D. 635 (Bede, lib. iii. ch. 19). Born of a royal Irish family, he became a monk and a missionary. In a sickness he seemed to die and to be carried by angels through Hell to Paradise. He lived twelve years after this vision, and bore upon his shoulder and cheek the scar left by the burning touch of a lost soul. "*The Vision of Cuningham*" (lib. v. ch. 12). He was the head of a family of Northumbria, and was miraculously restored to life the morning after his death. He too seemed to have passed through Hell, Purgatory and Heaven. In consequence of the vision, he gave two-thirds of his fortune to his wife and children, and bestowed the third on the monastery of Melrose, near which he led a life of silence and penance till his death.

cathedral to the wayside shrine. So, again, the favourite subjects of dramatic art were scenes from the world to come. According to Villani, at a great representation of this kind in Florence in 1304, the bridge over the Arno broke down beneath the weight of the assembled crowd, and many lives were lost. Dante's treatment of this pre-existing matter gives striking proof of his originality. He recognised the dominant ideas of his time, and was himself under their influence; nor, except by their means, could he hope to move his fellow-men. But the subject-matter thus selected for him by the popular taste of the day was dissolved, purified and refined in the crucible of his genius, until, as with a sculptor's skill, out of the rude clay he moulded a masterpiece of art, at once the product and the mirror of his age, yet in the fullest sense his own creation. In like manner the Greeks of old saw not only their own past, but Homer himself reflected in his works.

Dante styles his poem simply a Comedy. The title of *Divine* was added by posterity, because it treats principally of God and the divine judgment. The dedication of the *Paradiso* to Can Grande of Verona, where Dante himself explains the intention and meaning of his poem, begins thus: "Incipit Comoedia Dantis Allagherii, Florentini natione non moribus." He then proceeds to state the reason for this title. "In order to understand this, you must know that comedy is derived from *κῶμη*, that is, village, and *ᾠδή*, a song; thus it signifies a pastoral song. Now comedy is a certain kind of poetic narrative differing from all others. As regards its matter, it is distinguished from tragedy, which in the commencement begets admiration and tranquillity, but in the conclusion shame and remorse (hence its name of *τράγος*, that is, goat; for, in a certain sense, it is a goat's song, and unclean as such), as may be seen in the tragedies of Seneca. Comedy, on the contrary, begins sadly and ends happily, as we see in the comedies

of Terence. So also there is a wide difference between the language of tragedy and that of comedy; one is noble and elevated, the other simple and homely, as Horace has it in his poetry. Hence it is plain why the present work is called a 'comedy,' for the beginning is dreadful and repulsive, as its subject, which is Hell, but the end, which treats of Paradise, is prosperous, desirable and pleasant, and the style employed is simple and homely, being in the vulgar tongue, which even women understand."

The *Commedia* forms a trilogy, consisting of three poems (*canzoni*) *Hell*, *Purgatory* and *Heaven*, each of which contains again a series of cantos (*canti*).<sup>1</sup> Dante's reasons for the title which he gave to his poem are scarcely satisfactory to our present modes of thought and speech. Some of the older and more pedantic commentators, such as Gozzi, would have called it the *Danteid*, in imitation of the *Æneid* and the *Odyssey*. Undoubtedly the *Divina Commedia* possesses some characteristics of an epic poem, as it is primarily a representation of Dante's own fortunes, in which the great religious, moral and political interests of mankind are portrayed, whilst it embraces both heaven and earth in its ever-varying scenes. Yet it is not, strictly speaking, an epic, since the poet appears not merely as a narrator, but as an actor and spectator. He interrupts and enlivens the flow of his narrative by the dramatic movement of his personages; nor, as Schelling observes, have the subjects represented any natural sequence. Still less is it a drama in the proper sense, for its action has no definite limits, and the connecting chain, which is the narrative of Dante's individual history, is inadmissible in such a form of composition. It is not a didactic

<sup>1</sup> "And now the verse proceeds to torments new,  
Fit argument of this the twentieth strain  
Of the first song, whose awful theme records  
The spirits whelm'd in woe."—*Hell*, xx. 1.

poem, although the chief aim of the author was to instruct :

"And, to the mortal world when thou return'st,  
Be this reported."—*Par.* xxi. 86.

"So that, having view'd  
The glories of our court, thou may'st therewith  
Thyself, and all who hear, invigorate  
With hope, that leads to blissful end."—*Par.* xxv. 45.

"Yet beseech thee, point  
The cause out to me, that myself may see,  
And unto others show it."—*Purg.* xvi. 61.

For the end of his teaching is kept in the background, so that the poem apparently exists simply for itself. "It is, therefore, none of these various kinds of poetry, either singly or combined ; rather it has an original and organic individuality, unlike every other. Nor is any arbitrary blending together of these diverse poetic elements admissible."<sup>1</sup> The *Divina Commedia* is, in truth, the poetic encyclopædia of Western civilisation. It is not the epic of one hero or of one nation, but of humanity—of the lost and the redeemed, of Babylon as well as of the heavenly Jerusalem. The external design combines boldness of invention and symmetry of detail with numerical mysticism. Each of the three kingdoms has three times three, that is, nine gradations. The three principal divisions of the poem each contain thirty-three cantos, besides the introductory canto ; thus the complete number is one hundred, that is, ten times ten.<sup>2</sup>

In regard to the choice of a metre for his verse, Dante starts from the principle that poetry is inseparable from song. Poetry is only "an oratorical poem set to music." Each stanza is adapted to receive a certain tone. With

<sup>1</sup> Schelling. *Hildebrand, Etudes Italiennes*, Paris, 1868.

<sup>2</sup> The number ten signifies completeness.

him verse is not poetry unless wedded to song. In Germany, also, during the Middle Ages, ballads were never intended to be merely recited; verse and tune were bound together, and this alone constituted a ballad. When a poet brought out a ballad, he gave it its form by adapting it to a melody, either original or borrowed from an older song. Thus the melody materially influenced the composition of the poem." The metre chosen by Dante was the triple rhyme, *terzina* or *terza rima*. It consists, in the first place, of eleven-syllabled iambics, "which, on account of the length of their periods and their compass, he preferred for the sense, connection and words." These iambics are formed into strophes, *stanze*, of three lines (*terze rime*), triplets linked together continuously by the central line, which always rhymes with the first and third lines of the following stanza. The chain thus formed is terminated at the end of each canto by a verse (*ritornello*), rhyming with the middle line, being added to the last *terzina* of the canto. The euphony of this form of verse, linked together by the double rhyme in Italian, is unattainable by any translation. The scheme is this—

I. Terzine.	II. Terzine.	III. Terzine.	Last Terzine.	Ritornello.
<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>z</i>
<i>b</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>z</i>	
<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>y</i>	

Let us now return again from the outward form of the poem to its inward sense. Many modern writers have blindly ignored the fact, that Dante was a man of very definite convictions in religion, science and politics, and that to understand his poem you must go back to his time. Hence, as De Witte observes, "they have forced into the precious texture of the poem the most discordant features of modern thought." As to its real sense, Dante's own words to Can Grande are sufficiently explicit. He says,



"To understand its contents, it is to be noted that this work has not only one single meaning, but many meanings (*polysensum*).<sup>1</sup> For the first meaning is that of the letter; another is that of things signified by the letter. The first of these is called the *literal* sense; the second, the allegorical or moral. An example of this mode of treating a subject may be found in those words of the hundred and third Psalm, "In exitu Israel de Ægypto." By the letter, only the going out of the children of Israel from Egypt in the time of Moses is described; the *allegory* represents our redemption through Christ. The *moral* sense signifies the conversion of the soul from the mourning and the misery of sin to the state of grace; and the *anagogic* sense typifies the passing of the holy soul from the bondage of this corruption to the liberty of everlasting glory. And these mystical meanings, though called by different names, may all be termed allegorical, as distinguished from the literal or historic sense.

Hence it is plain that the subject must be twofold, corresponding to the twofold meaning. And we must consider the subject of this work, first, as it is to be understood literally, then, as it is to be taken allegorically. Among the Fathers and commentators this distinction of a fourfold meaning is common. Dante uses the well-known verse of the Schoolmen in his explanation of the "In exitu Israel: "

"Litera gesta docet, quæ credas allegoria,  
i/ Moralæ, quid agas, quid speres, anagogia." o/

According to St. Augustine, in expounding Holy Scripture, we must distinguish between what is defined as

<sup>1</sup> *Ep. ad Can Grande*, 6, 7. This letter, perhaps not authentic in its present form, represents unquestionably Dante's sentiments. *Convito*, tr. 2, c. 1; *Dante*, p. 99, third letter to Can Grande.

eternal truth or related as history, predicted as future or ordained as moral law. Dante includes the threefold deeper meaning of his narrative under the generic name "mystic or allegorical sense," and on this principle explains his poem. "The subject, then, taken in its literal sense, is the state of souls after death, on which the whole work turns. But considered allegorically, the subject is man, and the rewards or punishments he meets with from divine justice, according as by his own free acts he deserves well or ill. The literal sense, therefore, is merely the form in which he embodies the supreme ideas of God's government, the purpose of the world and of man, and the aims of Church and State. Thus Cacciaguida bids the desponding poet take courage, boldly to announce the truth :

"What though, when tasted first, thy voice shall prove  
Unwelcome; on digestion, it will turn  
To vital nourishment. The cry thou raisest,  
Shall, as the wind doth, smite the proudest summits,  
Which is of honour no light argument.  
For this, there only have been shown to thee,  
Throughout these orbs, the mountain and the deep,  
Spirits, whom fame hath note of. For the mind  
Of him, who hears, is loth to acquiesce  
And fix its faith, unless the instance brought  
Be palpable, and proof apparent urge."—*Par.* xvii. 125.

In all masterpieces of nature and art, the leading idea of the whole work is, by constant repetition, impressed upon the mind. Thus the two opening cantos of the *Inferno* furnish us with a key to the poem, and should be first studied.

Having reached the "middle way of life," the poet finds himself in a wild and gloomy wood, without knowing how he came there :

"How first I enter'd it I scarce can say,  
Such sleepy dulness in that instant weigh'd  
My senses down, when the true path I left."

—*Hell*, i. 10.

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After anxious wanderings, he arrives at the foot of a mountain, whose summit is illumined by the sun. Cheered by the sight, he begins the ascent; when a panther with spotted coat appears in the path, so that he hesitates to advance. Yet, encouraged by the "matin dawn" and the "sweet spring season," he hopes to escape the beast with its gaily spotted skin.<sup>1</sup> But a new terror seizes him as in view a lion comes, followed by "a she-wolf," who in her leanness seemed

"Full of all wants. . . . .  
 . . . . . She with such fear  
 O'erwhelmed me, at the sight of her appall'd,  
 That of the height all hope I lost."—*Hell*, i. 47.

As, step by step, he is driven back into the gloomy wood, he is met by one who calls to him, but whether he be "spirit or living man" he knows not. The figure declares itself to be Virgil, and asks Dante wherefore he returns to so great misery, instead of ascending "the pleasant mount," cause and source of all delight. The poet reverently addresses Virgil as his master and patron, from whom he derived that style which for its beauty had exalted him "into fame," and prays him to deliver him from this dreadful beast, the she-wolf. Virgil replies:

"Thou must needs  
 Another way pursue, if thou would'st 'scape  
 From out that savage wilderness. This beast  
 At whom thou criest, her way will suffer none  
 To pass, and no less hindrance makes than death;  
 So bad and so accursed in her kind,  
 That never sated is her ravenous will,  
 Still after food more craving than before.  
 To many an animal in wedlock vile  
 She fastens, and shall yet to many more,

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<sup>1</sup> "Di quella fera la gaietta pelle."—*Inferno*, i. 42.

Until that greyhound come, who shall destroy  
 Her with sharp pain. He will not life support  
 By earth nor its base metals, but by love,  
 Wisdom, and virtue; and his land shall be  
 The land 'twixt either Feltro. In his might  
 Shall safety to Italia's plains arise.

He, with incessant chase, through every town  
 Shall worry, until he to Hell at length  
 Restore her, thence by Envy first let loose."

—*Hell*, i. 88.

Virgil offers himself as Dante's guide through "eternal space," through Hell and Purgatory, although a "spirit worthier than himself," Beatrice, will appear to lead the pilgrim into Paradise. Dante accepts his offer and follows the poet:

"Onward he moved, I close his steps pursued."

—*Hell*, i. 132.

But Dante soon feels that his decision was rash. He has received no mission from on high, nor is he worthy to descend, like Æneas, into the lower world, or to be "rapt into Paradise" like St. Paul. The former was sent to the shades to learn and to predict the future of Rome, as the seat of the Empire and the Papacy:

"Both which, if truth be spoken, were ordain'd  
 And stablish'd for the holy place, where sits  
 Who to great Peter's sacred chair succeeds."

—*Hell*, ii. 24.

The latter, St. Paul, was ordained, by what he saw,

"To bring us back assurance in that faith  
 Which is the entrance to salvation's way."

—*Hell*, ii. 31.

Virgil then informs Dante that he had been sent by Beatrice, who told him that St. Lucy had come to her

from the "Blessed Lady," who was moved to pity Dante's case. The assurance that three ladies so highly blest care and plan for him in the court of Heaven, inspires the poet with fresh courage :

"As florets by the frosty air of night  
Bent down and closed, when day has blanch'd their leaves,  
Rise all unfolded on their spiry stems,  
So was my fainting vigour new restored."—*Hell*, ii. 127.

Thus encouraged, Dante follows his guide, his lord, and master, along the "deep and woody way."

## CHAPTER III.

## SYMBOLISM AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE "COMMEDIA."

AND now let us examine the allegory in detail, and first the dates chosen.

With the words of the Prophet in his mind, "I said, in the midst of my days, I shall go to the gates of hell" (Isai. xxxviii. 10), Dante descends to the lower regions in his thirty-fifth year, which is to him, "the midway of life."<sup>1</sup> The pilgrimage which follows occupies ten days. On the night of Holy Thursday, March 24-25, 1301, he enters the "gloomy wood;" on the morning of Good Friday, March 25, the day of the Incarnation, he stands before the sunlit "mount of delight;" on the evening of Good Friday he enters Hell with Virgil; on the evening of Holy Saturday they reach the Giudecca, its lowest circle. At half-past one o'clock on Easter morning, they stand before the entrance of the great cavern which leads to the other hemisphere; on Easter Monday, an hour and a half before daybreak, on the opposite side of Hell, at the foot of the Mount of Purgatory, they again see the stars. From Monday to Friday in Easter Week, Dante passes through

<sup>1</sup> "For this reason," he says, "our Lord died in His thirty-fifth year, because it did not become the Divinity to suffer decay."—*Conv.* iv. 23. So also St. Thomas: "Until we all meet . . . unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ" (Ephes. iv. 13). "Christ rose at the prime of life, which begins about the age of thirty, as Augustine says, *Civ. Dei*, xxii. 15."—*S.* iii. Supp. 71, a. 1. [*Ætas juvenilis*, "prime of life," extended with the Romans from twenty to forty years of life, and was the period at which they were considered fit for military service.]

Purgatory ; on the Friday and Saturday he traverses the seven heavens ; and on Sunday, Low Sunday, he ascends to the empyrean.

Thus, of the whole ten days, four nights and three days are spent in Hell, four days and three nights in Purgatory, and three days and three nights in Heaven. From his entrance into Purgatory till his final admission to the Beatific Vision, seven days elapse, the mystical meaning of which number is "rest in God."<sup>1</sup>

Now March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation, was in that year, according to Florentine computation, both Good Friday and New Year's Day 1301, the season at which God completed His work of creation, and of the full moon, when day and night were equal. On this day then, Dante, the representative of the human race, had wandered from the straight way, and the New Year is to herald in his new birth. The wood is the intellectual, moral and political ruin of mankind, the state of revolt from God.<sup>2</sup> Conscious of his error, Dante seeks to arise and to ascend the Mount of Beatitude,<sup>3</sup> which is illuminated by the rays of the rising sun ; but the three dominant

<sup>1</sup> "In six days are these works said to have been perfected, because by the number six, the perfection of the works was signified. But on the seventh day the rest of God is set forth, and thus its consecration is announced. So that God did not sanctify this day by His works, but by His rest, which has no evening, for it is not a creation."—*De Civ. Dei*, xi. 30, 31. Cf. Hugo of St. Victor, *Allegor. in Genesis*, l. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Convito*, iv. 24.

<sup>3</sup> "The first desire of everything, and the first implanted by Nature, is to return to its beginning. Now, as God is the Maker and the Beginning of our souls, which are like to Himself, according to the words, 'Let us make man in our own image and likeness,' the soul desires, above all things, to return to Him ; and, as a pilgrim, the first time he journeys on a road, thinks each house he sees in the distance the inn where he is to rest, and, on finding his mistake, hopes again in the next, and so on from house to house, till at last the inn is reached ; so our soul, on entering the new and untravelled way of life, looks indeed to the highest good as to its goal, but mistakes each thing which bears any semblance of good for its final aim ; . . . the smallest good appears to it to be great, and attracts at first its desire. Thus we see children fix their

passions, lust, pride and avarice, bar the way. He is about to conquer the panther of sensuality, when the lion of pride comes upon him, followed by the most dangerous of beasts, the she-wolf of avarice.

The threefold root of sin, as defined by the Apostle, is represented under the figure of the three beasts.<sup>1</sup> A definite animal symbolism is employed by the Holy Scriptures in both the Old and New Testament, and was further developed in the early Church. Novatian says that the Mosaic law, by its classification of clean and unclean animals, made them a mirror of human virtues and vices.<sup>2</sup> In Jeremias, the three beasts chosen by Dante appear together : "Wherefore a lion out of the wood hath slain them, a wolf in the evening hath spoiled them, a leopard watcheth for their cities; every one that shall go out thence shall be taken" (Jer. v. 6). "When fierce by nature, a man is a lion," says St. Chrysostom; <sup>3</sup> "when rapacious, a wolf." St. Peter (i. v. 8) describes Satan as a roaring lion, and in the writings of St. Augustine and St. Anselm especially, we find the lion representing the enemy of God and of justice, the evil one, the tempter; <sup>4</sup> and as Satan sinned

hearts, first on an apple, then, as they grow, on a little bird, and then on smart clothes, then on a horse, then on a wife, and then on wealth; at first in moderation, and then more, and yet more. The beginning of all desire, and, as it were, its last point, is God. . . . But we can lose our way to Him, as we can lose our road on earth; for as to a city, there can be but one best and straightest way, and one way only which leads us always farther from it, and other ways are only more or less divergent, so is it in human life. There are diverse ways, of which one is most true, and one most false, and other ways are more or less true, or more or less false. And as he who goes straightest to the city attains his desire and finds rest after his labours, so he who journeys in the contrary direction never finds what he seeks, and is never at rest."—*Convito*, iv. 12.

<sup>1</sup> *Convito*, iv. 24. "The concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life."—1 *St. John* ii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *De Cibis Judaicis*, c. iii. 7.

<sup>3</sup> *In Lazar.* vi. 5; *In Orat. Domin.* iv. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Enarrat.* in Ps. ix. 27, xxi. 14; *Enarrat.* ii. in Ps. xxi. 22, in Ps. lxxxviii. Serm. ii. 7.



through pride, so the lion is the type of that spiritual pride which separates man from God. The wolf is used as the symbol of avarice and cunning by the prophets Ezechiel and Sophonias,<sup>1</sup> and by our blessed Lord Himself. Swine<sup>2</sup> and dogs are selected as the images of lust, both by Holy Scripture and by the early Fathers; for whilst in the West the dog represents fidelity, in the East, both among Jews and Greeks, he typifies all uncleanness.<sup>3</sup> Dante finds in the same three dominant passions the origin of all the party strife in Italy. He tells us that

"Avarice, envy, pride,  
Three fatal sparks, have set the hearts of all  
On fire."—*Hell*, vi. 74.

Avarice, typified by the wolf, is let loose from Hell by Envy, to desolate the world.<sup>4</sup>

"He with incessant chase, through every town  
Shall worry, until he to Hell at length  
Restore her, thence by Envy first let loose."

—*Hell*, i. 106.

Already in the *Convito* Dante had described the insidious nature of temptations to avarice, and the pernicious effect of their sin. "Those things," he says, "which do not at first sight show their defects, are the more dangerous, for it is often impossible to guard against them. They are like a traitor, who puts on the face of a friend, and under the mask of friendship hides his impious hate. Hence the increase of riches is dangerously deceptive, for they indeed

<sup>1</sup> Ezech. xxii. 27; Sophon. iii. 3; Acts of Apostles xx. 29; St. Matt. vii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. vii. 6, viii. 31; Ep. Barnab. p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Isai. lvi. 11. Aug., *De Serm. Domin. in Monte*. ii. 69. "Both animals, the dog and the pig, are unclean." In Boethius, *De Consol.* iv. 273, the image of the wolf and swine is also employed.

<sup>4</sup> "But by the envy of the devil, death came into the world" (Wisd. ii. 24), i.e., the envy of Eve.

show us what they promise, but give the reverse. . . . In place of rest and refreshment, they give a racking, feverish and intolerable thirst; in place of content, new aims and increase of desires, and, moreover, great anxiety and fear of losing what is already gained. . . . What but this new heaping up of goods daily endangers, nay, destroys cities, countries, individuals? The first purpose of both laws, the civil and ecclesiastical, I mean, is to prevent this covetousness, which increases as riches are amassed" (iv. 12).

In Italy, therefore, as throughout the world, this vice of avarice is the chief cause of human misery. "This all-infecting malady,"

"Accurst be thou,  
Inveterate wolf! whose gorge ingluts more prey  
Than every beast beside, yet is not fill'd,  
So bottomless thy maw."—*Purg.* xx. 10.

In the creed of Zoroaster, the wolf is the symbol of *Æschino*, the evil spirit. So also in German mythology, Fenrir the wolf is the son of Loki, Wodan's foe. According to St. Thomas,<sup>1</sup> envy brings seven leading vices in its train; hence Dante says of the she-wolf:

"To many an animal in wedlock vile  
She fastens."—*Hell*, i. 96.

With regard to the third beast, the type of lust, the dog could not be employed as its symbol, since the greyhound was chosen as the figure of the deliverer,<sup>2</sup> who was

<sup>1</sup> S. ii. 2. q. 118, a. 8.

<sup>2</sup> This hero was foretold under the figure of a greyhound, *Veltro*. He was to be born between Feltro and Montefeltro in Romagna, and to drive back the she-wolf into Hell. Dante, with a play on the name, may have meant his friend Can Grande, Prince of Verona, who would save Italy, then distracted by the Emperor's absence. Cf. *Par.* xvii. 78. Dante also calls the followers of Orsini, in allusion to the name Orso, *orsatti*, little bears. Others understand it to refer to Ugucione della Faggiuola or to some great Emperor. According to Böhmer, we have here a reference to the hound in the ballad of Roland, who attacks his master's assailants.

to drive back the she-wolf to Hell. The poetic action further required the choice of the panther, rather than of the swine, since the latter could not be supposed to arrest the poet's steps :

"A panther . . . . . strove  
To check my onward going oft-times,  
With purpose to retrace my steps, I turn'd."

—*Hell*, i. 30.

It is probable, also, that the "gay coat" of the panther signified the sensuous attractions of unchastity. The choice was doubtless suggested by Apoc. xiii. 2, where the beast upon which the unclean Babylon is seated has the form of a leopard or panther.

Dante ascribes his deliverance from the wild and gloomy wood, "the valley of suffering," to a noble and blessed Lady, who suggested and aided his pilgrimage to eternal light. This is none other than "Mary, the mother of God," the impersonation of divine mercy, which graciously presents itself to the wandering sinner, and bids him repent. Her name is not mentioned, for neither hers nor that of her Divine Son are pronounced in Hell, but of Mary alone can the poet sing :

"In high heaven a blessed Dame  
Resides, who mourns with such effectual grief  
That hindrance, which I send thee to remove,  
That God's stern judgment to her will inclines."

—*Hell*, ii. 93.

In the circle of the blessed, her place is nearest to God ; "most like her Divine Son in glory" (*Par.* xxxii. 85), she is inundated with infinite bliss. St. Bernard invokes her intercession, that the poet may attain to the vision of the divine majesty, since to her prayers the Eternal Father grants the graces of faith and penitence.

Thus, at the opening of the *Divina Commedia*, the Blessed

Virgin appears as the Mediatrix who obtains for the poet the first grace of repentance ; and at its close, it is through her he gains the final grace, that of the Beatific Vision. Here Dante enunciates the fundamental principle of Catholic faith, that without preventing grace, man can neither turn to God, nor desire or will any supernatural work, nor attain the sight of God in Heaven.<sup>1</sup> The "noble and gracious Lady" turns to Lucia :—

" Her she thus bespake :  
Now doth thy faithful servant need thy aid,  
And I commend him to thee."—*Hell*, ii. 97.

Here again we have a real historical personage before us, the glorious virgin-martyr of Syracuse, venerated alike in the Catholic Liturgy and in the poet's fatherland. Dante is called the faithful servant of St. Lucia, on account of his special devotion to her. According to some early commentators, he had recourse to her when suffering from his eyes, and has here dedicated a graceful *ex voto* to his patroness.<sup>2</sup> St. Lucia symbolises, as her name implies, supernatural light, the grace of illumination, which must precede every meritorious act of the will.<sup>3</sup> She is the "foe of all cruelty," being the handmaid, not of justice, but of

<sup>1</sup> *Conc. Trid.* sess. vi. can. 3 ; S. i. 2. q. 109, a. 1. "Every movement is referred back to the first simple mover, who is God."

<sup>2</sup> [The legend runs, that the Saint was molested by a youth who professed to be in love with her on account of the beauty of her eyes. To save her purity, she plucked them out and sent them on a golden dish to the youth, who was converted by this act of self-sacrifice. The Blessed Virgin, by her intercession, restored the Saint's eyesight. This story is not mentioned in her Acts, quoted by St. Aldhelm, which are earlier than the seventh century (v. Butler, Dec. 13), nor by any early writers of St. Lucy's Life. The same story is related of a virgin of Alexandria, in Rosweide (*Vitæ Patrum*, lib. x. cap. 60), and of Blessed Lucia Francesi la Casta in the *Diario Domenicano*, Dec. 3.]

<sup>3</sup> God moves the soul of man in turning it to Himself, and therefore a movement of the mind is required ; but the first act by which man turns to God is faith. S. i. 2. q. 113, a. 5.

"preventing grace," whose behest she obeys. She therefore bears away the poet in his sleep to the gate of Purgatory, where he is to expiate his past errors. Although the initial movement of grace—"gratia operans"—precedes human effort, in order to complete the work of sanctification, man's co-operation is needed. This is obtained by co-operating grace, typified in Beatrice.<sup>1</sup> Lucia therefore hastens to Beatrice's throne in Paradise and thus addresses her:

"Thou true praise of God,  
Beatrice! why is not thy succour lent  
To him, who so much loved thee, as to leave  
For thy sake all the multitude admires?"

—*Hell*, ii. 103.

Her name, Beatrice, expresses that beatitude which is our ultimate end; her person and action typify the twofold means by which that end is to be attained—the supernatural knowledge of God, enlightening the understanding, and grace, the supernatural strength of the will. Therefore Dante designates her as, "she who led me unto God." (*Par.* xviii. 4.) Her throne in heaven is next to that of Rachel, the type of contemplative life absorbed in God. It is Beatrice who solves the poet's doubts. Her beauteous eyes survey all, and shine more brightly as, one by one, she unfolds each new mystery, and her pupil and herself draw nearer to the Divine presence. Through her, Dante soars above all earthly things, first here by faith, and at last in Heaven by the perfect knowledge of God:

<sup>1</sup> "Man cannot prepare himself for grace, save by the gratuitous aid of God interiorly moving him."—S. i. 2. q. 109, a. 6. "In that effect (of grace) in which our mind does not move itself, but is moved by God, and He is the sole mover, the operation is attributed to Him, and the grace is therefore called *operating*—*gratia operans*. Habitual grace, in as far as it heals and justifies the soul and makes it pleasing to God, is called *operating grace*, but as the principle of meritorious act, it is called *co-operating grace*."—S. i. 2. q. iii. a. 2.

“There will be seen  
That, which we hold through faith, not shown by proof,  
But in itself intelligibly plain.”—*Par. ii. 43.*

The second part of *Faust* ends in the same way. Faust having died without faith, is mercifully pardoned through Mary, at the prayer of Margaret, the beloved of his youth, because he had striven; and the Chorus Mysticus sings:<sup>1</sup>

“All things transitory  
But as symbols are sent;  
Earth's insufficiency  
Here grows to event;  
The indescribable,  
Here it is done;  
The woman soul leadeth us  
Upward and on.”—*Bayard Taylor's trans.*

The last verse is very inferior to Dante's grand words,  
“l'amor che muove il sole e l'altre stelle:”

“By the love impell'd,  
That moves the sun in heaven and all the stars.”  
—*Par. xxxiii. 135.*

It is Beatrice who sends Virgil, for grace presupposes nature, and theology natural science.<sup>2</sup> Theology indeed, and especially the theology of the blessed, which reposes on the vision of God, far transcends all merely human knowledge; but reason and science subserve the purposes

<sup>1</sup> [We need scarcely point out the falseness of Goethe's doctrine of the salvation of one who dies impenitent and without faith, nor his utter ignorance of the Christian doctrine of repentance.]

<sup>2</sup> “If this sacred science borrows anything from the philosophical sciences, it does so to better illustrate its teaching. It uses them, not because of any defect or insufficiency of its own, but because of the defect of our understanding, which is easily led, by the knowledge it has through reason attained of the other sciences, to those things which are above reason, and which are taught in this science.”  
—*S. i. q. 1, a. 5.*

of eternal truth and prepare the way for it.<sup>1</sup> Therefore Beatrice descends to Hell, and asks Virgil to conduct her beloved as far as he can penetrate, when she herself will undertake his guidance :

“ A dame, so blest  
And lovely I besought her to command,  
Call'd me ; her eyes were brighter than the star  
Of day, and she, with gentle voice and soft,  
Angelically tuned, her speech address'd :  
O courteous shade of Mantua ! thou whose fame  
Yet lives, and shall live long as nature lasts !  
A friend, not of my fortune, but myself,  
On the wide desert in his road has met  
Hindrance so great, that he through fear has turn'd.

. . . . .

Speed now,  
And by thy eloquent persuasive tongue,  
And by all means for his deliverance meet,  
Assist him. So to me will comfort spring.”

—*Hell*, ii. 54.

Virgil hastens to meet the erring poet, and encourages him to undertake his escape from the savage wood ; for the light of reason can see clearly the loathsomeness of sin, the punishment due, and the consequent need of penance.<sup>2</sup> Along this way Virgil conducts Dante, solving by arguments from reason his doubts and difficulties, until he resigns his client to Beatrice, at the entrance of the earthly Paradise.

<sup>1</sup> “ For philosophy consists in the love, study, and friendship of wisdom ; not indeed of that which regards the knowledge of certain special arts and manufactures, but that wisdom which, wanting nothing, is the living mind, and sole primal reason of all things. But this love of wisdom in the intelligent soul is an illumination and a certain attraction and call from that pure wisdom, so that the study of wisdom seems to be the study of the divinity, and its friendship with the pure soul.”—Boethius, *In Porphyry. Dialog.* i.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Plato's *Gorgias*.—“ There are some judgments of God, to which the human reason by its own path can arrive.”—*De Monarch.* ii. 8.

Here Virgil takes leave of him :

" And thus he spake : Both fires, my son,  
The temporal and eternal, thou hast seen ;  
And art arrived, where of itself my ken  
No further reaches. I, with skill and art,  
Thus far have drawn thee. Now thy pleasure take  
For guide. Thou hast o'ercome the steeper way,  
O'ercome the straiter.

Expect no more  
Sanction of warning voice or sign from me,  
Free of thy own arbitrement to chuse,  
Discreet, judicious. To distrust thy sense  
Were henceforth error. I invest thee then  
With crown and mitre, sovereign o'er thyself."

—*Purg.* xxvii. 126.

With Dante's entrance into the earthly Paradise begins a higher supernatural state of being, wherein Virgil, by the teaching of speculative and practical reason, is altogether unable to distinguish aright ; for, as Dante says, with the schoolmen, all knowledge is based upon accurate distinction.<sup>1</sup> The poet now requires Virgil's guidance no longer, as his will is healed from the wound of concupiscence which inclined it to evil, and is upright. He finds himself in that state which theologians term "*status integritatis* ;" that is, he is drawn by nature itself to what is good, and has only to follow its teaching.<sup>2</sup>

As Virgil's mission was, by philosophy and earthly science in general, to serve as a guide to a higher know-

<sup>1</sup> "By the intellect comparing and distinguishing."—*Thom.* i. *Periherm.* lect. 3. "The most beautiful bough that springs from the root of reason is that of distinction" (*discrezione*).—*Convito*, iv. 8.

<sup>2</sup> "In a state of integral nature (*natura integra*) as regards his powers of action, man could will and do naturally the good proportioned to his nature, such as that of acquired virtue, but not what exceeds these faculties, such as the good of virtue infused."—*S.* i. 2. q. 110, a. 2. Cf. q. 109, a. 3 ; q. 63, a. 1.



ledge and to the possession of eternal truth, Dante styles him "Thou who every art and science valuest" (*Hell*, iv. 69), "The gentle sage who knew all" (*Hell*, vii. 3), "The sea of all intelligence" (*Hell*, viii. 6), who will guide his client "Far as his lore avail" (*Purg.* xxi. 33.). Thus Virgil says:

"What reason here discovers, I have power  
To show thee; that which lies beyond, expect  
From Beatrice, faith, not reason's task"

—*Purg.* xviii. 44.

Reason directs each individual man to faith, and through faith to sight. Reason and faith would bring us to our true end, but our passions lead us astray, and man needs the guidance of two divinely ordained authorities—the Emperor and the Pope; the former for his temporal welfare, the latter for his eternal salvation.<sup>1</sup> Virgil was chosen as the type of reason leading to faith, for all Christian antiquity saw in him a prophet of Christ. In his fourth Eclogue, the yearnings of his age for a Redeemer are expressed in almost scriptural terms:

"The last great age, foretold by sacred rhymes,  
Renews its finished course: Saturnian times  
Roll round again, and mighty years, begun  
From their first orb, in radiant circles run;  
The base degenerate iron offspring ends,  
A golden progeny from Heaven descends.

The father banished virtue shall restore,  
And crimes shall threat the guilty world no more.

The goats with strutting dugs shall homeward speed,  
And lowing herds secure from lions feed;  
His cradle shall with rising flowers be crowned,  
The serpent's brood shall die; the sacred ground

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<sup>1</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 16.

Shall weeds and poisonous plants refuse to bear  
Each common bush shall Syrian roses wear.

The Fates, when they this happy web have spun,  
Shall bless the sacred clue and bid it smoothly run,  
Mature in years, to ready honours move.  
O of celestial seed! O foster son of Jove!  
See labouring Nature calls thee to sustain  
The nodding frame of heaven, and earth, and main;  
See to their base restored, earth, seas, and air,  
And joyful ages, from behind, in crowding ranks appear."

—*Eclog.* iv. 5-63.

As Virgil then represents those noble heathen, who recognised the need of a divine revelation and longed for the blessings of Christianity, the poet Statius thus addresses him :

"Thou didst, as one  
Who, journeying through the darkness, bears a light  
Behind, that profits not himself, but makes  
His followers wise, when thou exclaimed'st, 'Lo,  
A renovated world, justice returned,  
Times of primeval innocence restored,  
And a new race descended from above.'  
Poet and Christian both to thee I owed."

—*Purg.* xxii. 67.

Secondly, Virgil is the poet of the Roman Empire, which was designed by God to lead men to temporal happiness by the precepts of reason, as the Papacy was to guide them to eternal bliss by the teaching of faith.<sup>2</sup> The *Æneid* did not merely make his reputation as a poet, but was the expression of his belief in the purpose of Divine Pro-

<sup>1</sup> It is most probable that the prophecy of a Redeemer related by Josephus, *Bell. Jud.* vii. 31, by Tacitus, *Hist.* v. 13, by Suetonius, *Vesp.* c. 4, and by Dio Cassius, lxi., impelled Virgil to write this eclogue, only with this difference, that he looks for the Redeemer to come, not from the East, but from Rome itself. Cf. *Isaias* vii., ix.

<sup>2</sup> *Hell.* i. 74-85; ii. 15-30.

vidence that the Roman Empire, by its greatness and universal dominion,<sup>1</sup> should restore peace to the world.<sup>2</sup> As the jurisdiction of the Empire was over things temporal, not eternal, its purpose could be attained by the precepts of reason. In other words, this universal monarchy, thus divinely ordained, was a human institution in the sphere of natural advantages and powers. But as reason and free-will, by and for which the Empire was founded, are God's gifts to man, therefore it proceeded from Him, and was destined to be developed into a world-wide dominion.

Virgil was also chosen by the poet as the representative of philosophy and reason, both in the sphere of science and of moral and civil life, for he had described, as none other had, the torments of the guilty souls in Tartarus and borne witness to the need of penance. Thus he becomes Dante's guide through the lower world.

"These are the realms of unrelenting fate,  
And awful Rhadamanthus rules the state;  
He hears and judges each committed crime,  
Inquires into the manner, place, and time;  
The conscious wretch must all his acts reveal  
(Loth to confess, unable to conceal),  
From the first moment of his vital breath  
To his last hour of unrepenting death.

. . . . .  
You see before the gate what stalking ghost  
Commands the guard, what sentries keep the post;  
More formidable Hydra stands within,  
Whose jaws with iron teeth severely grin;  
The gaping gulf low to the centre lies,  
And twice as deep as earth is distant from the skies.  
The rivals of the gods, the Titan race,  
Here, singed with lightning roll, within the unfathomed  
space;

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<sup>1</sup> *De Monarch.* ii. 3, 4, 7.

<sup>2</sup> "Saturnian kingdoms."—*Ibid.* i. 2.

Here lie the Aloëan twins (I saw them both),  
 Enormous bodies of gigantic growth,  
 Who dared in fight the Thunderer to defy,  
 Affect his heaven, and force him from the sky;  
 Salmoneus suffering cruel pains I found  
 For emulating Jove, the rattling sound  
 Of mimic thunder and the glittering blaze  
 Of pointed lightnings and their forked rays.

There Tityus was to see, who took his birth  
 From Heaven, his nursing from the foodful earth;  
 Here his gigantic limbs, with large embrace,  
 Enfold nine acres of infernal space;  
 A ravenous vulture in his opened side  
 Her crooked beak and cruel talons tried,  
 Still for the growing liver digged his breast,  
 The growing liver still supplied the feast.  
 Ixion and Pirithous I could name,  
 And more Thessalian chiefs of mighty fame;  
 High o'er their heads a mouldering rock is placed,  
 That promises a fall and shakes at every blast.  
 They lie below, on golden beds displayed,  
 And genial feasts with regal pomp are made;  
 The Queen of Furies by their sides is set,  
 And snatches from their mouths the untasted meat,  
 Which, if they touch, her hissing snakes she rears,  
 Tossing her torch and thundering in their ears.  
 Then they who brother's better claim disown,  
 Expel their parents and usurp the throne,  
 Defraud their clients, and, to lucre sold,  
 Sit brooding on unprofitable gold,  
 Who dare not give, and e'en refuse to lend  
 To their poor kindred or a wanting friend,  
 Vast is the throng of these."—*Æn.* vi. 566.

The explanation of the poem, which we have given, is the tradition of five hundred years. Man, in the person of Dante, is its subject. He is hindered by sin from advancing in the path of virtue, until Divine Wisdom, Beatrice, having taken Reason, Virgil, into her service, goes forth to rescue

him. Deeply moved by the terrible penalties of Hell and its lessons of the hideousness of sin, Dante is purified by contrition and penance, and at length conducted by Beatrice into the joys of Paradise.

Very similar to this interpretation, although differing in one essential point, is that of the worthy Nestor of German commentators on Dante, Witte,<sup>1</sup> with whom Hugo Delf,<sup>2</sup> Wegele,<sup>3</sup> and others agree. According to Witte, the *Vita Nuova*, the *Convito*, and the *Divina Commedia* form a trilogy which expresses Dante's spiritual development. The *Vita Nuova*, in which he extols the gracious Beatrice, and in her the pure love of God, is the record of childlike piety unclouded by doubt. In the *Convito*, the poet honours philosophy as his sympathising "Donna Gentile," who seeks to console him for the loss of Beatrice. But her radiant eyes shed no guiding light, for a divine revelation from God can alone guide him to his goal. Bound by pride and self-love to this fleeting life, without faith, hope, or love, alienated from the Christian religion, and a prey to evil passions, he is driven back by savage beasts from the heights illumined by the sun of truth. At last awakened by grace, he sees the sinfulness of his presumptuous questionings, and repents of having harboured the pride of philosophy. The old faith, the old love for Beatrice are reawakened, and the day on which the Saviour redeemed mankind is likewise the day of his redemption. Thus, according to Witte, also, the idea of the poem is both religious and moral, but with this difference, that in Dante's philosophical bent he sees the cause of his transgression. And on this point, though correct as to the design in

<sup>1</sup> Page 54, *et passim*.

<sup>2</sup> *Jahrbuch der Dante Gesellschaft*, iii. 59.

<sup>3</sup> This author has, however, changed his opinion in the second edition of his work on Dante (Jena, 1865, p. 93). See on the other side, Ruth, *Studien über Dante*, 1853, p. 230, and especially Klaczko, *Revue Contemporaine*, 1854, No. xvi.

general, Witte is in error. His ignorance of the inner life of the Catholic Church, as the joint product of earth and Heaven, and of its ordered development from Adam downwards, prevents his understanding aright the *Divina Commedia* in relation to philosophy.<sup>1</sup> For, in fact, Dante's love for philosophy,<sup>2</sup> the "Donna Gentile" of the *Convito*, who there consoles him, is essentially the same as his love for theology, the "Donna Gentilissima" of the *Divina Commedia*, whose eyes shine more brightly as she brings her beloved nearer to the throne of God. Beatrice indeed declares that natural science is as far from the wisdom of faith, as earth from Heaven. Yet they are not opposed; both find their proper place in the teaching of theologians:

"Behold your art, from the divine  
As distant, as the disagreement is  
Twixt earth and Heaven's most high and rapturous orb."  
—*Purg.* xxxiii. 87.

The historical and political interpretations constitute a second class, which includes many later Italian and German commentators, commencing with Dionisi towards the end of the last century. Since 1820, the conflicting political parties in Italy have borrowed the poetical manifestoes of their principles from Dante's pages.<sup>3</sup> According to these critics, the subject of his poem is the victory of the Empire over the partisans of the Guelfs and of the Popes, and, as its result, radical reform in legislation, government, and all civil institutions. According to Fraticelli, the wood, in which Dante strayed, signifies either his political undertakings, or, according to Marchetti,

<sup>1</sup> Schündelen, *Theologie und Philosophie bei Dante*, Bonn Literaturblatt, 1869, No. 25.

<sup>2</sup> ii. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Particularly Rosetti, *Dello Spirito Antipapale della Div. Com.*, London, 1852. Witte calls this book "brilliant nonsense." Vecchioni, *Della Intelligenza della Div. Com.* Napoli, 1832. E. Aroux, *Dante Hérétique, Révolutionnaire et Socialiste*, 1854.

his exile, which was their consequence. The latter author sees in the panther, Florence; in the lion, France; in the she-wolf, the Guelf party with the Pope at its head. Rossetti derives Guelf from wolf. This interpretation contradicts itself. For how could the Guelf be said to have come into the world "through the envy of the devil"? Besides, Dante accuses equally both Ghibellines and Guelfs of injustice, and by no means does he condemn all Guelfs (*Hell*, xvi. 15); so that "'tis hard to see who most offend" (*Par.* vi. 106). Dante is only a Ghibelline, in so far as he wishes to see the Empire sufficiently prosperous to restore peace; but he also sets limits to its authority, both by proclaiming the independence of individual states, and by insisting on the profound reverence due from the Empire to the Pope. He censures Ezzelino the Ghibelline; he commends Malaspina the Guelf. The ferocious champions of Frederic's party and the advocates of Louis of Bavaria alike regarded Dante as a priest-ridden slave. But throughout his whole life he was far above all party factions. He places Ghibellines in Hell and Guelfs in Heaven, and in his own exile fled for refuge to Guido da Polenta, a leading Guelf. Had the *Commedia* been written by some fanatic partisan of the Ghibellines to serve their ends, it would have been despised by contemporaries and long since forgotten.

Nor should we forget that for centuries the older commentators, as we before observed, knew of no such meaning. How then could the purpose of the poet have been so completely hidden from all with whom he lived, and in whose mother-tongue he wrote? Surely those who were thus familiar with him and his times are his safest critics!

The two interpretations, that is, the moral and religious, or the historical and political meaning, are both well-grounded; neither excludes, but each illustrates the other.

Dante himself declares that the purpose of his great poem was to point out man's way to temporal and eternal happiness. Reason and free-will, by overcoming his lower desires, lead man to temporal happiness, and gradually raise him to a state of moral freedom, through the exercise of the natural virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude. Faith alone, which prepares the way for the supernatural virtues of hope and love, enables man to attain his final end, the vision of God. Yet as man does not live alone, nor for himself only, but in society,<sup>1</sup> and thus only can attain his end, the inquiry naturally suggests itself, what form of government is designed by God in the order both of the natural and supernatural life? Politics, therefore, hold an essential place in the scheme of the *Commedia*. Moreover, man being corrupted by original sin,<sup>2</sup> is incapable by himself of attaining this twofold end. Now in the universal monarchy developed in the Roman Emperor, Dante recognises the most perfect form of civil life; for it holds the lower desires in check by spur and bridle, administers justice, leads man to his earthly goal, and prepares the way for his supernatural happiness. To this higher life, which belongs to man as a citizen of a supernatural kingdom, he is guided by the Pope, the Vicar of Christ and successor of St. Peter, the head of the Church and of Christendom. As both Church and State are ordained by God to guide man to his twofold end, errors in either must be a grave evil, and lead him astray from the straight path. Thus questions of philosophy and morals, of civil and ecclesiastical government, all find a place in Dante's poem.

Next, as to the poetical merit of the *Commedia*. The grandeur of Dante's vision lies in its perfect harmony.

<sup>1</sup> *De Monarch.* i. 3.

<sup>2</sup> "The fall of our first parents was the turning-point at which all our going astray began."—*De Monarch.* i. 16.



The heavens contain many spheres, each of which has its separate existence, its definite laws, forms, and powers. Yet the higher and the lower are in no way opposed, but depend on and influence each other, as members of one great whole :

“ Thus do these organs of the world proceed,  
As thou beholdest now, from step to step ;  
Their influence from above deriving,  
And thence transmitting downwards.”—*Par. ii. 120.*

So also in the terrestrial world. Its various kinds of being have their individual existence ; but all are ordained on a successive scale of development and gradation, the source of their unity and order. The natural and supernatural kingdoms form the chief divisions of the universe. To the former belongs all that man is by himself, all that he knows, strives after, and achieves. The latter includes all that he derives from above. Of himself, man has only the knowledge which comes through reason and the power of his natural will. The wisdom of faith and the power of grace are alike from above. Each of these two orders has three members. To nature belong reason, natural morality, and the state ; to grace, faith, supernatural virtue, and the Church. And upon the harmony of these members depends the truth, perfection, and order of life, and therefore also of peace and happiness.

Thus everything finds with Dante its fitting place and significance. Nothing is excluded or disparaged to serve a higher end. The material world points to the spiritual ; history to its instructive development ; the ancient heritage to the Christian revelation ; the fatherland to the Church. And the secret of this marvellous harmony is that the poet sees all things in God, the one source of unity, “ where all time and place are present.” Nor does he stand as a cold-hearted solitary, apart from and beyond his times. He is the son of

his fatherland, himself not exempt from its prevailing sins, and subject to human frailties, which prevent him from rising above the attraction of things present, to those which endure and are eternal. Hence his words to Beatrice :

“Thy fair looks withdrawn,  
Things present with deceitful pleasure turn’d  
My steps aside.”<sup>1</sup>—*Purg.* xxxi. 31.

And his contrite address to the spirit of his friend Forese Donati :

“If thou recall to mind  
What we were once together, even yet  
Remembrance of those days may grieve thee sore.”  
—*Purg.* xxiii. 115.

His sympathy with everything human,<sup>2</sup> his frank confession of error and sins, his sense of the danger of earthly attachments, make, as we have said, his life’s story the history of mankind. He seems, indeed, to have anticipated and to have realised Goethe’s wish :

“Whate’er is portioned ’mong mankind,  
In my own intimate self shall I enjoy,  
With my soul grasp all thoughts most high or deep,  
Heap on my heart all human joys and woes,  
Expand myself, until mankind becomes  
A part as ’twere of my identity.”<sup>3</sup>—*Anster’s trans.*

How terribly true to nature is his description of the characteristics of blasphemous, obdurate pride :

<sup>1</sup> An axiom of the schools : “*Præsentia movent animum.*”

<sup>2</sup> So Ruth, p. 175 *et passim*.

<sup>3</sup> “Was der ganzen Menschheit zugetheilt ist,  
Will ich in meinem innern Selbst genießen  
Mit meinem Geist, das Höchste und Tiefste greifen,  
Ihr Wohl und Weh auf meinen Busen häufen  
Und so mein eigen Selbst, zu ihrem Selbst erweitern.”—*Faust*.

“ Say who  
 Is yon huge spirit, that, as seems, heeds not  
 The burning, but lies writen in proud scorn,  
 As by the sultry tempest immatured ?  
 Straight he himself, who was aware I ask’d  
 My guide of him, exclaim’d, ‘ Such as I was  
 When living, dead such now I am. If Jove  
 Weary his workmen out, from whom in ire  
 He snatch’d the lightnings, that at my last day  
 Transfix’d me ; if the rest he weary out  
 At their black smithy labouring by turns  
 In Mongibello, while he cries aloud,  
 ‘ Help, help, good Mulciber ! ’ as erst he cried  
 In the Phlegrean warfare ; and the bolts  
 Launch he, full aim’d at me, with all his might,  
 He never should enjoy a sweet revenge. ”

—*Hell*, xiv. 43.

Contrast with this, the picture of sacred love under the figure of St. Bernard :

“ I saw instead a senior at my side,  
 Robed, as the rest, in glory ; joy benign  
 Glow’d in his eye and o’er his cheek diffused,  
 With gestures such as spoke a father’s love. ”

—*Par.* xxxi. 55.

The poet is transported at the sight :

“ So gazed I then  
 Adoring, for the charity of him  
 Who, musing in this world, that peace enjoy’d,  
 Stood livelily before me. ”—*Par.* xxxi. 100.

In his episodes Dante gives life to his idea by descriptions of actual events. Without distorting history, he transfigures his heroes by revealing their inner motives, and enriches each well-known story with pictures of his own creation.

To the marvellous treasures of the *Divina Commedia*, art

owes its highest inspirations. From Giotto and Bernardo Orcagna<sup>1</sup> to Luca Signorelli, Filippo Brunellesco, Fra Angelico, Michael Angelo, Raphael, Tintoretto, down to the modern creations of Cornelius, Koch, Flaxman, and Doré, its influence is seen. By a few touches of his master-hand, each character is clearly depicted. Observe his description of Sordello, a man who scorned everything mean :

"We soon approach'd it. O thou Lombard spirit!  
How didst thou stand, in high abstracted mood,  
Scarce moving with slow dignity thine eyes.  
It spoke not aught, but let us onward pass,  
Eying us as a lion on his watch."—*Purg.* vi. 62.

In the richness and force of his imagery Dante stands alone. His figures seem to live and move, and are marked by a perfection of detail which shows the practised eye of the artist, naturalist, and sportsman, yet likewise that unequalled play of phantasy which the subject demands. His similes are always novel, yet always apposite. This is true even of the *Inferno*, where the imagery, borrowed from the animal world, is often of a savage, and even of a repulsive type. Among the plants on the Mount of Purgatory grows

<sup>1</sup> ["Each of the five great painters of Italy, who were called upon to paint the awful scene of the Last Judgment, borrowed the imagery of Dante and reproduced his teaching. Yet how different has the subject become in the several hands of Giotto, Orcagna, Fra Angelico, Michael Angelo and Tintoret. Each threw the colouring of his own individual mind over the great subject of his contemplation, and became no less the reflex of his age and the phase of thought which pervaded it, than the scholars of Dante."—*Art Schools of Medieval Christendom*, by A. Owen, edited by Professor Ruskin, ch. vi. p. 191.

"Sandro Botticelli, 1437–1515, of Florence, summoned by Sixtus IV. to superintend the works of the Sistine Chapel, worked with Perugino there, a student of Dante, on whose work he began a commentary, and for a printed edition of the *Divina Commedia* he executed a series of illustrations. This was published in 1488, and was one of the first books ornamented with copper engravings. He also illustrated with his own hand a MSS. of the *Divina Commedia*, now in possession of the Duke of Hamilton."—*Ibid.* chap. vii. p. 236.]

the bulrush, with which the poet encircles his brow; the thorn, which seems withered, but buds afresh in spring; and the lily, whose pure calyx opens to the sun. In the starlit realm of Paradise shines the light which is the symbol of the Godhead. Dante has described at once all that is most sublime and most base, most beautiful and most revolting; love and the purest virtues, hate and the darkest crimes; perfect sanctity and vilest sin; the raptures of the blessed and every gradation of torment in Hell. All these he has described and set forth in symbol and simile, whilst over all floats the ideal atmosphere in which the poet breathes. With him the sublime never becomes pompous, nor the tender and lovely insipid. How exquisite is his description of waiting in hope:

“E’en as the bird who midst the leafy bower  
Has in her nest sat darkling through the night  
With her sweet brood, impatient to descry  
Their wished looks, and to bring home their food  
In the fond quest, unconscious of her toil,  
She, of the time prevenient, on this spray  
That overhangs their couch with wakeful gaze  
Expects the sun, nor ever till the dawn  
Removeth from the east her eager ken.”

—*Par.* xxiii. 1.

So also the sense of escape from a great peril:

“As a man with difficult short breath,  
Forespent with toiling, ’scaped from sea to shore,  
Turns to the perilous wild waste and stands  
At gaze.”—*Hell*, i. 21.

The worthlessness of fame:

“The noise  
Of worldly fame, is but a blast of wind,  
That blows from diverse points, and shifts its name,  
Shifting the point it blows from. . . . .

. . . . . Your renown  
Is as the herb, whose hue doth come and go;  
And His might withers it, by whom it sprang  
Rude from the lap of earth."—*Purg.* xi. 98.

Only Shakespeare and Tacitus possess, with Dante, that mysterious power of laying hold of the reader, and concentrating his ideas and emotions on one single point. But Dante surpasses Shakespeare in passion, Tacitus in grandeur, and both in simplicity. "In the *Divina Commedia*," says A. Von Humboldt, "the remarkable conciseness of the style intensifies both the earnestness and the depth of the impression produced. Like blocks of stone in a cyclopean wall, sentence upon sentence, word upon word, are piled up. Truly does Macaulay term the style "incomparable."<sup>1</sup> Sometimes a single sentence describes a whole character, as in the description of Celestine V. :<sup>2</sup>

"I saw  
And knew the shade of him, who to base fear  
Yielding, abjured his high estate."—*Hell*, iii. 55.

Or take his own horror at the sight of Hell :

"I, through compassion fainting, seem'd not far  
From death, and like a corse fell to the ground."  
—*Hell*, v. 137.

Or, again, the despair of Ugolino :

"On either hand through agony I bit."  
—*Hell*, xxxiii. 55.

In these lines we hear the heavy fall of the body, we see the rage of the wretched man. In the description of Hell the verses sound like a wail of lamentation, now wild and rude, now stern and terrible; very rarely are the dark figures relieved by more gracious images, such as the

<sup>1</sup> *Essay on Dante.*

<sup>2</sup> [Not then canonised, nor was the supernatural motive of his abdication necessarily recognised.]

episode of Francesca da Rimini. The inscription over the entrance produces a sensation of awe and terror which no translation can convey :

“Through me you pass into the city of woe ;  
Through me you pass into eternal pain ;  
Through me among the people lost for aye.  
Justice the Founder of my fabric moved ;  
To rear me was the task of Power divine,  
Supremest Wisdom, and primeval Love.  
Before me things create were none, save things  
Eternal, and eternal I endure.  
All hope abandon, ye who enter here.”—*Hell*, iii. 1.

On the other hand, the poet introduces us into Purgatory with words of gentle consolation :

“Sweet hue of eastern sapphire, that was spread  
O’er the serene aspect of the pure air,  
High up as the first circle, to mine eyes  
Unwonted joy renew’d soon, as I ’scaped  
Forth from the atmosphere of deadly gloom,  
That had mine eyes and bosom fill’d with grief.”  
—*Purg.* i. 13.

The opening words of the *Paradiso* breathe light and love, and are instinct with the peace of Heaven :

“His glory, by whose might all things are moved,  
Pierces the universe, and in one part  
Sheds more resplendence, elsewhere less.”—*Par.* i. 1.

In accordance with the horror of the subject, the *Inferno* is the most forcible in expression and severe in diction ; its very words are gloomy and terrifying. The moans of the lower world are silenced, and a deep stillness reigns in Purgatory, whilst the heights of Paradise are radiant with colour, and there indeed is a very harmony of the spheres.<sup>1</sup> But only in his own tongue can we know how Dante

<sup>1</sup> Schelling.

speaks with words, now mighty as the surging sea, now soft as the evening breeze rustling in the waving pine-tops. All attempts to reproduce in a translation the magic of his verse must fail; for the language itself was his own creation. It made him the father of Italian literature, and Italy, till then far behind France and Germany, became first in poetic art.

But the *Divina Commedia* bears alike the impress of its age and of the faults of its age. The introduction of learned disquisitions into the framework of his poem is foreign to our tastes, but this defect is more than compensated by his marvellous power in clothing "things ineffable" in poetic imagery. The form of his verse has also been censured; pedants have taken exception to the use of words then familiar and borrowed from the Latin hymns of the Church. The boundaries between Latin and the vulgar tongue (*lingua volgare*) in that age were not accurately defined, and Latin, as the language of the Church and of literature, was then held in high esteem, and was by no means a dead language.

Two works only, in ancient and modern times, can claim comparison with the *Divina Commedia*—Homer's *Iliad* and Goethe's *Faust*. The nearest in matter and form, though still its inferior, is *Faust*. It is the only German poem of universal compass which unites, under the figure of Faust, man's present efforts and his final end. It is a comedy, but, as Schelling remarks, far more in the sense of Aristophanes, and divine in another and more poetic acceptation of the word. But granted that Goethe in genius and culture was Dante's equal, both as a poet and in other respects, yet he lacked the creative power necessary to develop his idea. His ideal world is purely allegorical, and his images of it, though artistically drawn, are arbitrary and well-nigh unintelligible. Most poets clothe their ideas in allegorical forms, whose unreality is apparent



throughout, and the illusion entirely fails. Dante's figures, on the contrary, have a real existence, independent of their allegorical significance, and they themselves, more than their antitypes, speak to our imagination. With him we tread upon sure ground and are surrounded by realities.<sup>1</sup> Goethe's world, displayed in *Faust*, may be richer in ideas, more varied in form, than that of Dante, but the problem of the universe which he proposes to unriddle is never solved. Wreck and dissolution of body and soul alike are, with *Faust*, the only end of this life. Dante, on the other hand, sees one eternal purpose traced and developed in all things, and man through the Redeemer, winning his way to God. Nor can the fragmentary form of *Faust* compare with the organised completeness of Dante's poem.<sup>2</sup>

Homer's epic, at first sight, seems incontestably superior to the *Divina Commedia*. Like Dante, Homer created a language for his countrymen, and thus gave them life as a nation. His poem also was the parent of art, and the model for every species and every style of poetry. Homer's creation, no less than Dante's, reflects the world in which he lives, its ideas, its joys and sorrows, its hopes and fears, its outer and inner life. The Hellenic world, with its childlike, naïve ideas of Heaven and earth, its human gods, the unceasing combats of its heroes, its simple forms of private and public manners, comes home and speaks to us all. In every land Homer's epic is a school-book. The *Divina Commedia*, on the contrary, stored as it is with scholastic science and historic facts, is accessible only to a scholar. Yet the *Divina Commedia* being based on Christianity, from which all proceeds and to which all tends, that sun "who leads all wanderers safe through every way,"<sup>3</sup> must rank far above Homer's poem. Chris-

<sup>1</sup> Compare A. Von Schlegel, W. 2 Ausg. 3 Bd. p. 226.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Huber, *Jahrbuch der deutschen Dante-Gesellschaft*, ii. 50.

<sup>3</sup> *Hell*, i. 17.

tianity created a new invisible world, animated by all those pure and powerful motives, which most nearly affect the heart of man, and this world of soul and spirit Dante has described to us, from the first conviction of sin and smart of penance to the final joy of the blessed.

Regarded from another point of view, the *Divina Commedia*, as a Christian study, has a higher significance than any other poem. Schelling, Schlosser, and others see in every great poet a twofold life—one belonging to all countries and times, the other bearing the peculiar stamp of his age.<sup>1</sup> This is true, although not in Schlosser's sense, that the most diverse minds "can grasp at once the manifold significance of the *Divina Commedia*," irrespective of the poet's individual meaning; for he was simply the mouthpiece of man's higher intellect, which, like the divine works in the external world, is necessarily many-sided.

In Dante's poem, we must discriminate between symbols which are of universal application and those which refer exclusively to one particular age, because both the idea and matter are essentially Christian, and the Christian view of the world is alone universal. Whatever heathenism had of truth or morality, Christianity made its own. Whatever humanism now demands as the proof of a true religion, Christianity in principle has ever preached. When Jesus Christ became very Man, all that is truly human became Christian. True humanity and Christianity are but different names for one and the same thing—the human race elevated and made divine by the truth and grace of Christ. And this is the burden of Dante's song. Christian dogma is no mere passing glimpse of the Divine and Eternal Truth, but is the incarnate Lord Himself, Who, in a higher sense than that of Dante:

<sup>1</sup> Wegele, p. 577 *et passim*; Schlosser, *Studies on Dante*, ch. 44.

"Hath made  
Both Heaven and earth co-partners in his toil."  
—*Par. xxv. 1.*

He spoke all truth. His words are the expression and confirmation of all that man seeks, or can give him rest. The moral laws which Christ laid down as the rule of man's inner life, are but the formulas of those eternal laws by which all human communities are governed. On the voluntary obedience of men to those eternal laws depends, under Providence, the history of nations, as on the necessary submission of irrational creatures to these same laws rests the order of the universe. Schlosser then is right, in that Christianity, proceeding from God, the source of all truth, the prototype of all good, contains the forces of a civilisation which is universal for all times and all stages of development. Christian truths are unchangeable, but with the progress of mankind and new epochs of civilisation, they receive ever deeper meanings and fuller applications.

Therefore, in a higher sense than Homer, Dante is the poet of humanity. For in him, in the whole scope of his thought and feeling, the redeemed race of man, raised by Christ to an infinitely higher grade of existence, finds the expression of its innermost life. Posterity then pays him a just tribute of admiration; and rightly does his great countryman, Michael Angelo, Dante's equal in another sphere of art, thus speak of him:

"He came from Heaven, and had, whilst mortal, sight  
Both of where just, where gracious punishment  
Is given; whence, living, back to God he went,  
And of all seen brought us the truth and light,  
A shining star, who made my birth-nest bright  
With fame not earned, by rays upon it sent.  
This world could give him no equivalent;  
Thou, God, who mad'st him, only canst requite.

Dante I mean ; his works were ill and late  
Known by that herd, devoid of thanks and sense,  
Which scants its favours only to the best ;  
Yet would that I were he, mine too his fate ;  
For his hard exile, with his excellence,  
I would exchange all this world's happiest."

—*Plumptre's trans.*

Critics differ as to the date of the *Divina Commedia*. At the close of the *Vita Nuova* the poet had already announced that his praise of Beatrice would be such as "hath never been said of any woman." This was probably written in 1300, and his words, and the vision which he there mentions, coincide with the plan of the *Divina Commedia*. But Dante declared further that he would "study to the utmost of his power," and this "for some years." He knew that poetic talent alone would not suffice, and that knowledge must go hand in hand with art. The *Convito* and the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* show that his studies were chiefly in philosophy, theology, and philology. Dante could not have given the time required for such studies in the years succeeding his banishment in 1300. The *Inferno* must, therefore, have been composed at a somewhat later date.<sup>1</sup>

This view is confirmed by various passages in the poem—the reference to Can Grande, the deliverer of Italy (*Hell*, i. 100), and the mention of the age of Pope Clement V., who died in 1314. The *Purgatory* was finished in 1319, for the poet speaks of it as completed in his first Eclogue to Giovanni di Virgilio. On the other hand, the *Paradiso* was not finished till his last years, so that his life and his life's work together reached their term.

In the restoration of the text of the *Divina Commedia*, K. Witte has rendered excellent service. His *edizione*

<sup>1</sup> According to Balbo, p. 287, and others, the *Inferno* was completed in 1308 or 1309.

*critica*, conscientiously carried out according to the true principles of criticism, lays down a firm basis for future commentators. Professorships founded for the explication of the *Divina Commedia* gave rise from the first to exhaustive commentaries; among which those of Boccaccio, Francesco da Buti, Guinforto degli Bargigi are conspicuous. Of the older commentators, Benvenuto da Imola is remarkable for historical comprehensiveness, Petrus Dantis for theological depth. Among the earliest commentaries are those of Ottimo, Jacopo della Lana, and Anonimo Fiorentino. That of Ottimo was written twelve years, that of Della Lana but six years, after the poet's death.

Among later commentators, the most important are, in Italy, G. Giuliani, Nicolo Tommaseo, Berardinelli, F. Scolari; in Germany, Ruth, Blanc, Scartazzini, Philalethes (King John of Saxony), Wegele, and Witte. Of German translations, the best are those in blank verse by Kannegiesser, Kopisch, Josephine von Hoffinger, Blanc, Tanner, Elnor, Bartsch, Notter, and especially that of Streckfuss.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [For some notice of English literature on Dante, see Editor's Preface.]

## CHAPTER IV.

## HELL.

THERE are but few to whom Dante's *Inferno* is wholly unknown, or who do not remember some at least of its sublime and affecting pictures. Even those who study the whole poem prefer the *Inferno* both to the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. The mighty genius of the poet here fixes our gaze on figures, often appalling indeed and terrible, but so true and lifelike, that once seen, they are never wholly forgotten. Not that the imagery of the *Paradiso* is less definite and impressive, but the symbolism of the *Inferno* deals with suffering and pain, and with these we are familiar; we know by bitter experience the torments of heat and cold, and the anguish of a broken heart. These punishments are indeed the symbols of sin, but we understand the symbol, and alas ! also the sin, which it symbolises. When we descend into this awful lower world, and in these tormented spirits see expressed every species of evil, each must feel his own guilt. Francesca da Rimini's tale of woe brings to our lips the poet's own confession, "At hearing which, downward I bent my looks."<sup>1</sup> Paradise, it is true, is the goal of our hopes, but it lies beyond our experience. And though Heaven, like Hell, begins in this life, and by grace dwells now in the human heart ; yet how hard it is to rise above our miseries to those pure heights, and descry, even from afar, the poet's vision of God ! None

<sup>1</sup> *Hell*, v. 107.

but a spirit like that of Dante, elevated and chastened by conflict and suffering, could so depict the joy, the ardent and loving aspirations, the heavenly beauty of saints in glory; and only amid unceasing wrestling and striving after higher things can we hope to feel as he felt.

Hell, the city of woe and of eternal, hopeless torment, is the abode of all who have departed this life in a state of mortal sin. Before the existence of man, Hell was created for the fallen angels, and will eternally endure. It is a work of the justice of the Triune God. The omnipotence of the Father strikes down all who oppose His will; the wisdom of the Son ordains chastisements proportionate to the sinner's deserts; and the charity of the Holy Ghost demands their infliction, as part of that eternal moral order which all creatures must acknowledge, whether in the joy of the blessed, or in the impotent, despairing rage of the damned:<sup>1</sup>

"Justice, the founder of my fabric, moved;  
To rear me was the task of Power divine,  
Supremest Wisdom, and primeval Love."<sup>2</sup>

—Hell, iii. 4.

Within its portals are eternal darkness, fiery heat and icy cold:

<sup>1</sup> Plato expresses the same idea in the *Gorgias*, where Socrates argues, that to do wrong and not to suffer for it, is the greatest of evils, for this is to perpetuate the wrong. So St. Augustine: "And when a vitiated nature is punished, besides the good it has in being a nature, it has this also, that it is not unpunished. For this is just, and everything just is good."—*De Civ. Dei*, xii. 3. So again St. Thomas: "Whatever rises up against any order must necessarily be put down by that order, and by him who is its head."—*S. i. 2. q. 87, a. 1.*

<sup>2</sup> Although the external works of the Holy Trinity belong to all three Persons, omnipotence, wisdom, and love are attributed respectively by appropriation to the Father, Son, and Spirit (1 Cor. i. 24). "*Power* has the nature of a beginning, whence it is compared to the Heavenly Father, Who is the beginning of the whole Divinity. But *Wisdom* is like to the Heavenly Son, inasmuch as He is the Word, which is nothing else than the 'conceptus' of wisdom. *Goodness*, being the nature and object of love, is compared to the Divine Spirit, Who is Love."—*S. i. q. 39, a. 8.*

"Woe to you, wicked spirits! hope not  
Ever to see the sky again. I come  
To take you to the other shore across,  
Into eternal darkness, there to dwell  
In fierce heat and in ice."—*Hell*, iii. 78.

Hither, where "guilt hath no redemption,"<sup>1</sup> at the heels  
of an infuriate beast, are dragged the lost souls, whose  
individual personal sin alone has wrought their ruin:

"Ah me!  
Almighty Justice! in what store thou heap'st  
New pains, new troubles, as I here beheld!"

—*Hell*, vii. 18.

For the sake of things that perish, they have forsaken  
the eternal, imperishable love, and their torments are  
deservedly eternal:

"He hath in sooth good cause for endless grief,  
Who, for the love of thing that lasteth not,  
Despoils himself for ever of that love."—*Par.* xv. 8.

The structure of Hell in the *Commedia* results from the poet's view of the fabric of the universe in general, and of our earth in particular. Lucifer, with his followers, having rebelled against God, was hurled down to the then uninhabited earth. On the Western hemisphere, opposite our own, a broad stretch of land rose above the sea. There fell Lucifer. The earth, as he reached it, recoiled in horror and was covered as with a veil by the ocean. This upheaval of the land towards our hemisphere created the vast vacuum of Hell; upon the surface, near Jerusalem, rose Calvary, the Mount of Expiation. Since then, according to the old

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* xxiv. 83.

<sup>2</sup> "They sinned against the Eternal Good when they despised eternal life."—*S. Supp.* q. 99, a. 1. And St. Augustine says, "He who destroys in himself a good that might have been eternal, creates thereby an evil which is eternal."—*Civ. Dei*, xxi. 12.



geographers, half the earth's surface, the wide expanse from the Pillars of Hercules to the East Indies, has been covered by the sea, across which no ship has ever sailed. Cast down headlong by God and weighted by his load of sin, Lucifer struck the earth with such force that he pierced it to its centre. The upper part of his gigantic frame stuck fast in one hemisphere, the lower half in the other. The portion of land thus projected by his fall formed on the opposite side, in mid-ocean, the Mount of Purgatory and of the earthly Paradise, where, since Adam's expulsion, no mortal foot has trod :

" On this part he fell down  
From heaven ; and th' earth, here prominent before,  
Through fear of him did veil her with the sea,  
And to our hemisphere retired. Perchance,  
To shun him, was the vacant space left here,  
By what of firm land on this side appears,  
That sprang aloof."—*Hell*, xxxiv. 115.

Thus antipodal to the Mount of Purgatory is Jerusalem, the city of expiation and of redemption, where sin was blotted out and the curse removed from the earth. Jerusalem and Golgotha on one side, confront the Mount of Paradise and Purgatory on the other. Their position at the two extremities of the earth's diameter, which traverses the seat of Lucifer and the entrance of Hell, has a deep symbolism. Jerusalem is situated in the centre, not of Christendom, but of the inhabited world ; for the other half of our hemisphere, from Jerusalem eastwards, is peopled by Mahometans and heathen. Only the western half, as far as the Atlantic Ocean, is Christian. Its centre is Rome, the tomb of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, the chair of their successors, the central point of the Church and of Christendom.

As love, like fire, strives to mount upwards, so is sin by its own weight driven down. Thus Lucifer, after he had

sinned, necessarily fell to earth's lowest centre; and, as the heavens move round the earth,<sup>1</sup> it is at the extremest point of separation from God, His life, light, and love, that the evil one lies paralysed in cold and darkness. The shape of Hell is that of an immense inverted cone or crater, which, diminishing in ever-narrowing circles, terminates in a point, the centre of the world and the seat of that "emperor, who sways the realm of sorrow."<sup>2</sup> The heavenly spheres, on the other hand, widen from the earth upwards, the nearer they approach the throne of God, "that Almighty King who reigns above,"<sup>3</sup> until they reach that throne itself, the empyrean which embraces the universe. As the beatified souls in nine spheres, and the angelic choirs in nine orders, mount up towards God, so also in nine circles the lost souls are hurled down, deeper and deeper, according as their guilt has wrought in them a greater likeness to Satan. So also as God governs the heavenly spheres through His servants, Satan rules his realm through his inferior ministers. The figures of mythology, Charon, Minos, the Furies, Centaurs, Harpies, giants, and the like, are the demons, guardians, and inhabitants of the different circles of Hell. At one end of half the earth's diameter is the bottom of Hell, at the other its mouth. The narrowing circles, separated from each other by ravine and rock, descend in terraces, and are each the abode of a distinct class of sinners. Entering Hell from Florence, the poet passes through each circle from right to left, often mysteriously borne downwards, across fearful chasms and abysses, through streams of fire and blood, until at length he has traversed its whole circuit. Through this region of the lower world flow four streams, Acheron, Styx, Phlegethon, and Cocytus, which are in reality the same river under different names. This river is fed by the

<sup>1</sup> According to the Ptolemaic system.

<sup>2</sup> *Idell*, xxxiv. 27.

<sup>3</sup> *Idell*, i. 120.

tears which sin causes to flow, and by the blood which tyrants and murderers have shed. The waters flow down in secret channels, to serve below as instruments of torment.

Within the gate of Hell, but on this side Acheron, is the first circle, where dwell the undecided and the indolent, with those souls who knew not Christ, and therefore could not attain to the Beatific Vision. As they have lived without sin, their only pain is an unsatisfied longing for the revelation of Christ. The *Inferno* proper is divided into two principal regions, upper and lower Hell. The latter is the City of Dis, Lucifer or Satan. The basis of these divisions is fixed by the difference between sin and sin.

First, Dante, in common with St. Thomas and Aristotle, distinguishes between sins of human frailty and sins of malice.<sup>1</sup> The former are punished in the upper, the latter in the lower Hell, the special abode of the wicked. To the former class belong the luxurious, gluttons, and drunkards, the avaricious, prodigals, the wrathful, and heretics. Sins of malice can be committed either by force or by fraud.<sup>2</sup> Either way, wrong is done; therefore the city of Lucifer contains both classes of sinners.<sup>3</sup> But sins of fraud are greater than sins of violence, because they proceed from abuse of the intellect, man's noblest gift. Accordingly,

<sup>1</sup> "We must first treat of ignorance, which is the cause of sin on the part of the reason, and this diminishes or lessens the sin."—S. i. 2. q. 76, init. "Secondly, of frailty or passion, which is the cause of sin on the part of the sensitive appetite. Thirdly, of malice, which is the cause of sin on the part of the will."—a. 4. But sins of frailty can be grave, for "reason by deliberating can prevent, or at least resist passion."—q. 77, a. 8. Sins of malice are in a threefold way graver than sins of frailty: (1) "Since (the sin) consists chiefly in the will, the more the sinful movement proceeds from the will alone, the more does its gravity increase. . . . (2) The habit by which a man sins from malice is a permanent disposition (whereas passion passes quickly away). . . . (3) The sinner is evilly disposed towards the end itself, which is the very principle of his evil action; whereas in sins of weakness the end is but momentarily forgotten."—q. 48, a. 4.

<sup>2</sup> "Injury is done in two ways, by force or fraud."—Cicero, *De Offic.* i. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, *Ethics*, vii. 7.

the violent belong to the first division of lower Hell. They include those who have used violence against their neighbour, as murderers and tyrants; against his property, as robbers; against themselves, as suicides, or against their own property, as gamblers; against God, as blasphemers, or against His property, that is, against created nature, as *peccatores contra naturam*, and usurers.<sup>1</sup> To the second division belong the fraudulent. They are divided into ten classes—seducers, flatterers, simoniacs, soothsayers, corrupt officials, hypocrites, thieves, evil counsellors, the sowers of schism and strife, forgers. All these in general have sinned against the divine command of brotherly love. Far more aggravated is fraud against those to whom we are bound by special ties, temporal or spiritual; hence treachery, the abuse of confidence, is the most heinous kind of fraud; and the lowest depth of Hell contains those false to kindred and fatherland, to friends and benefactors, to the Emperor and to God.<sup>2</sup> Here Virgil reminds his charge of the Aristotelian classifi-

<sup>1</sup> The taking of any interest upon money lent was prohibited by the Mosaic law and by the laws of the Church. Exod. xxii. 25; Levit. xxv. 36; Deut. xxiii. 19; C. xiv. q. 3; 4 in 6<sup>o</sup> *de Usuris* (5. 5). St. Thomas teaches, that to do so is intrinsically unjust, because that is sold which is not. There are certain things, he says, of which consumption is inseparable from their use, as wine and food; and others which can be used without being consumed, as a house to live in. The use of a house can be lawfully charged for, without selling the house itself, but to charge for the wine and also for its use is to charge for the same thing twice over, or to charge for that which is not. Now money is invented for the purpose of exchange, and its proper use is its consumption or circulation; hence to charge for its use is unlawful. Usury comes from the use charged for. Cf. S. ii. 2. q. 78, a. 1. [The altered practice of the present day is not based on a change of principle. Titles have always been admitted on which money might be received for the loan of money, and which, comparatively rare in other days, are now of universal occurrence.]

<sup>2</sup> The old Roman law also regarded treachery as the most heinous of crimes, and punished it with extreme severity, as in the case of the Alban dictator, Mettius Fuffetius, who was drawn to pieces by four horses. *Liv. Hist.* i. 28. Livy adds, "This was the first and last instance among the Romans of punishment being inflicted without

cation of crime, in which brutishness is considered less culpable than formal malice.<sup>1</sup>

But Dante did not intend to enumerate in order every species of sin. On the contrary, he freely selects certain sins, and places them graphically before us in these two fundamental divisions. Here are his own words :

“Of all malicious act abhorr’d in Heaven,  
The end is injury; and all such end  
Either by force or fraud works other’s woe.  
But fraud, because of man peculiar evil,  
To God is more displeasing; and beneath,  
The fraudulent are therefore doom’d to endure  
Severer pang. The violent occupy  
All the first circle; and because to force  
Three persons are obnoxious, in three rounds,  
Each within other separate, is it framed.  
To God, his neighbour, and himself, by man  
Force may be offer’d; to himself I say,  
And his possessions, as thou soon shalt hear  
At full. Death, violent death, and painful wounds  
Upon his neighbour he inflicts; and wastes,  
By devastation, pillage and the flames,  
His substance. Slayers, and each one that smites  
In malice; plunderers, and all robbers, hence  
The torment undergo of the first round,  
In different herds. Man can do violence  
To himself and his own blessings: and for this,  
He, in the second round must aye deplore  
With unavailing penitence his crime,  
Whoe’r deprives himself of life and light,  
In reckless lavishment his talent wastes,  
And sorrows there where he should dwell in joy.

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regard to the laws of humanity. In every other case we may justly boast that no other nation has shown greater mildness.”

<sup>1</sup> “Three species of things are to be avoided in morals,” Aristotle says, “incontinence, malice, brutishness; but brutishness is a less evil than malice, though more formidable, for it does not so much deprave the best in man, as evince a complete absence of it.”—*Ethics*, vii. 1.

To God may force be offer'd, in the heart  
 Denying and blaspheming His high power,  
 And Nature with her kindly law contemning.  
 And thence the inmost round marks with its seal  
 Sodom and Cahors, and all such as speak  
 Contemptuously of the Godhead in their hearts.  
 'Fraud, that in every conscience leaves a sting,  
 May be by man employ'd on one, whose trust  
 He wins, or on another who withholds  
 Strict confidence. Seems as the latter way  
 Broke but the bond of love which Nature makes,  
 Whence in the second circle have their nest,  
 Dissimulation, witchcraft, flatteries,  
 Theft, falsehood, simony, all who seduce  
 To lust, or set their honesty at pawn,  
 With such vile scum as these. The other way  
 Forgets both Nature's general love, and that  
 Which thereto added afterward gives birth  
 To special faith. Whence in the lesser circle,  
 Point of the universe, dread seat of Dis,  
 The traitor is eternally consumed.'

. . . . .  
 'Dwell not in thy memory  
 The words, wherein thy Ethic page describes  
 Three dispositions adverse to Heaven's will,  
 Incontinence, malice, and mad brutishness,  
 And how incontinence the least offends  
 God, and least guilt incurs? If well thou note  
 This judgment, and remember who they are,  
 Without these walls to vain repentance doom'd,  
 Thou shalt discern why they apart are placed  
 From these fell spirits, and less wreakful pours  
 Justice divine on them its vengeance down.'

—*Hell*, xi. 23.

Let us now accompany the poet, under Virgil's guidance,  
 in his wanderings through Hell. The day is already spent ;  
 it is the evening of Good Friday, the day of our Lord's  
 death :

"We are come  
 Where I have told thee we shall see the souls,

To misery doom'd, who intellectual good  
Have lost."—*Hell*, iii. 15.

He is horrified at the sounds and sights which meet him :

"Here sighs, with lamentations and loud moans,  
Resounded through the air pierced by no star,  
That e'en I wept at entering. Various tongues,  
Horrible languages, outcries of woe,  
Accents of anger, voices deep and hoarse,  
With hands together smote that swell'd the sounds,  
Made up a tumult, that for ever whirls  
Round through that air with solid darkness stain'd,  
Like to the sand that in the whirlwind flies."

—*Hell*, iii. 21.

Here we find the undecided, cowards and indolent, "who lived without praise or blame," with that faint-hearted band of angels who neither fought for God with the good angels, nor against Him. "Heaven drove them forth," nor the "depth of Hell receives them."<sup>1</sup> These are despicable souls, upon whom Virgil disdains to waste another word. "Speak not of them, but look and pass them by."<sup>2</sup> Among them he sees a Pope, St. Celestine V.,<sup>3</sup> who had renounced his high dignity :

"Who, to base fear  
Yielding, abjured his high estate."—*Hell*, iii. 56

"These wretches, who ne'er lived,  
Went on in nakedness, and sorely stung  
By wasps and hornets, which bedew'd their cheeks  
With blood, that, mix'd with tears, dropp'd to their feet,  
And by disgusting worms was gathered there."

—*Hell*, iii. 60.

This is the punishment of base-minded, slothful souls. Their number surpasses the poet's utmost imagination ; for,

<sup>1</sup> *Hell*, iii. 34, 49.

<sup>2</sup> *Hell*, iii. 51.

<sup>3</sup> See Footnote 2, p. 53.

ever stung by noxious insects and loathing themselves, they pursue a banner which unceasingly whirls round with every wind, and is ever in flight.

The poet advances till his steps are arrested by the river Acheron. An old man, Charon,<sup>1</sup> with shaggy cheeks, "around whose eyes glared wheeling flames," is here waiting for the lost souls, whom he ferries across :

"To the curst strand, that every man must pass  
Who fears not God."—*Hell*, iii. 100.

The lost spirits, "faint and naked," sorely wailing, draw near :

"As fall off the light autumnal leaves,  
One still another following, till the bough  
Strews all its honours on the earth beneath ;  
E'en in like manner Adam's evil brood  
Cast themselves, one by one, down from the shore,  
Each at a beck, as falcon at his call.<sup>2</sup>  
Thus go they over through the umber'd wave ;  
And ever they on the opposing bank  
Be landed, on this side another throng  
Still gathers."—*Hell*, iii. 104.

<sup>1</sup> So Virgil :

"There Charon stands, who rules the dreary coast,  
A sordid god : down from his hoary chin  
A length of beard descends, uncombed, uncleaned,  
His eyes like hollow furnaces on fire ;  
A girdle foul with grease binds his obscene attire."  
—*Æneid*, vi. 413.

<sup>2</sup> "An airy crowd came rushing where he stood,  
Which filled the margin of the fatal flood ;  
Husbands and wives, boys and unmarried maids,  
And mighty heroes' more majestic shades,  
And youths entombed before their fathers' eyes,  
With hollow groans, and shrieks, and feeble cries ;  
Thick as the leaves in autumn strew the woods,  
Or fowls, by winter forced, forsake the floods  
And wing their hasty flight to happier lands,  
Such and so thick the shivering army stands,  
And press for passage with extended hands."  
—*Æneid*, vi. 422.



The gloomy region "trembling shakes," lightnings flash through the darkness, and Dante falls senseless to the ground. He is awakened by a "crash of heavy thunder," and finds himself on the other side of Acheron, on the brink of an abyss, whence come sounds of "plaints unutterable."<sup>1</sup>

Even his guide turns "all pale of look," as he precedes him into the first circle. This is the place of those who have died without baptism.<sup>2</sup> Here no plaint is heard, but only low sighings from multitudes, "many and vast;" these suffer no torment, but their longings ever remain unsatisfied. Virgil explains their state:

"Ere thou pass  
Farther, I would thou know, that these of sin  
Were blameless; and if aught they merited,  
It profits not, since baptism was not theirs,  
The portal to thy faith. If they before  
The gospel lived, they served not God aright;  
And among such am I."—*Hell*, iv. 30.

But not here, in the *limbus infantum*, are our first parents or the patriarchs of Israel, for they had been delivered by "a mighty One (our Lord), with victorious trophy crowned." Here Dante sees, separate from all the rest, the shades of the four great poets of antiquity, Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan. They greet Virgil on his return to the lower world with Dante, and even receive the latter as the sixth member of their group:

<sup>1</sup> *Hell*, iv. 9.

<sup>2</sup> [St. Thomas and the great majority of theologians teach that infants dying unbaptized are simply excluded from Heaven, and being free from personal guilt, suffer no pain of sense, which is its penalty. St. Thomas says, "As they are not made capable (proportionate) of possessing the vision of God, they no more grieve for its loss than a bird does that it is not an emperor or a king. Moreover, though not united to God in glory, they are joined to Him by the share they possess of natural goods, and are able to rejoice in Him by natural knowledge and love."—S. App. q. 1, a. 2.]

"But greater honour still  
They gave me, for they made me of their tribe;  
And I was sixth amid so learn'd a band."

—*Hell*, iv. 95.

Nor is Dante's consciousness of his own worth inconsistent with his constant praise of humility, as the mother of love and all true greatness. He was but proclaiming, in the face of his enemies, that his native city had lost in him one whose gifts were from God, and who therefore cared not for popular applause. Accompanied by this band of poets, Dante arrives at a proud castle, "seven times with lofty walls begirt."<sup>1</sup> Within its seven gates, "on the green enamel of the plain," rises a hill, "open, bright, and lofty," from whence he surveys its inhabitants :

"There dwelt a race, who slow their eyes around  
Majestically moved, and in their port  
Bore eminent authority: they spake  
Seldom, but all their words were tuneful sweet."

—*Hell*, iv. 107.

Here Dante recognises Hector and Æneas, Caesar with "eagle eye," Electra, Camilla, Lucretia, Cornelia, and, "sole apart retired," Saladin, the "Soldan fierce," sole representative of the Oriental race. Higher up, amidst a second group, appears Aristotle, "the master of the sapient throng." Next to him Socrates and Plato, with the other philosophers and sages of antiquity, Avicenna and Averroes,<sup>2</sup> "who made that commentary vast." In these two groups, Dante does honour to the natural good qualities of the heathen, in

<sup>1</sup> According to some, this symbolises the seven natural virtues, viz., the three intellectual virtues, wisdom, science, understanding; and the four moral virtues, prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude. According to others, the seven elementary subjects of education, the Trivium and the Quadrivium, are signified. See p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Celebrated for his translation and commentary of Aristotle. See account of Averroes, ch. viii.

accordance with the teaching of the Church, which admits their possession of certain moral virtues.<sup>1</sup>

We now descend with him into the second circle :

"There Minos stands,  
Grinning with ghastly feature: he, of all  
Who enter, strict examining the crimes,  
Gives sentence, and dismisses them beneath,  
According as he foldeth him around.

. . . . .  
With his tail so oft  
Himself encircles, as degrees beneath  
He dooms it to descend."—*Hell*, v. 4.

Here "all light is silent." Shrieks and lamentations pierce through the darkness; "the stormy blast of hell with restless fury drives the spirits on," and whirls them round :

"I understood, that to this torment sad  
The carnal sinners are condemn'd in whom  
Reason by lust is sway'd.<sup>2</sup> As in large troops  
And multitudinous, when winter reigns,  
The starlings on their wings are borne abroad;  
So bears the tyrannous gust those evil souls.  
On this side and on that, above, below,  
It drives them: hope of rest to solace them  
Is none, nor e'en of milder pang."—*Hell*, v. 38.

Here appear Achilles, Helen with Semiramis, Dido and Cleopatra, Paris and Tristan.<sup>3</sup> But Dante is especially

<sup>1</sup> "The fathers of the Council of Trent attribute to fallen man free-will, representing it, however, as very much weakened, and in consequence teach that not every religious and moral action of man is necessarily sinful, although it be never in itself and by itself acceptable to God, nor anywise perfect." See Möhler, *Symbolism*, v. i. p. 65, Robertson's trans. 2d ed. *Conc. Trid.*, sess. vi. can. 7.

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas enumerates among the consequences of carnal sins, blindness of soul, inconsiderateness, precipitation, inconstancy (S. ii. 2. q. 153, a. 5), all which are represented by the restless storm and darkness.

<sup>3</sup> A knight of King Arthur's Round Table.

struck by two spirits who cling together, Francesca da Rimini and her brother-in-law Paolo. Betrothed to Paolo, she had been married instead to his brother Lanciotto.<sup>1</sup> In the following lines, which reveal with matchless truth the depth and madness of her love, Francesca tells her story :

“If thou art bent to know the primal root,  
From whence our love gat being, I will do  
As one, who weeps and tells his tale. One day  
For our delight we read of Lancelot,  
How him love thrall’d. Alone we were, and no  
Suspicion near us. Ofttimes by that reading  
Our eyes were drawn together, and the hue  
Fled from our alter’d cheek. But at one point  
Alone we fell. . . . .  
. . . . . The book and writer both  
Were love’s purveyors. In its leaves that day  
We read no more.”—*Hell*, v. 121.

Guerrazzi criticises Dante for making Francesca, and not Paolo, a man, the narrator of their guilt; yet this simple avowal, in words so tender and delicate, such as only a woman could use, makes us sympathise to a certain extent with her bitter anguish. We feel with Dante :

“Francesca, your sad fate  
Even to tears my grief and pity moves.”  
—*Hell*, v. 113.

The second circle of Hell is the largest of all, for Dante probably remembered the saying, so common among the Saints, that of all sins punished in Hell, that of which Francesca accuses herself is the most universal. The concluding effect of her tale is thus described :

“While thus one spirit spake,  
The other wail’d so sorely, that, heart-struck,

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<sup>1</sup> [The reading of the romance of Sir Lancelot was the occasion of their sin. They were surprised by Lanciotto and put to death. Dante alludes to this poem again in *Paradiso*, xvi. 13.]

I, through compassion fainting, seem'd not far  
From death, and like a corse fell to the ground."

—*Hell*, v. 135.

The poet revives in the third circle :

"In the third circle I arrive, of showers  
Ceaseless, accursed, heavy and cold, unchanged  
For ever, both in kind and in degree.  
Large hail, discolour'd water, steely air,  
Through the dun midnight air stream'd down amain :  
Stank all the land whereon that tempest fell."

—*Hell*, vi. 106.

The three-headed Cerberus tears and rends the spirits who here lie howling "as curs," and "with one side the other screening, oft they roll them round." He bars the progress of the poet, until Virgil quiets him with a handful of earth :

"E'en as a dog, that, yelling, bays for food  
His keeper, when the morsel comes, lets fall  
His fury, bent alone with eager haste  
To swallow it."—*Hell*, vi. 27.

Under this figure we recognise the gluttons, among whom Dante finds a Florentine, Ciacco. This torment, Virgil says, will be still more increased after the general judgment.

On the descent, leading to the fourth circle, stands Pluto, the god of riches, who forbids their entrance. He succumbs at Virgil's mention of the Archangel Michael, whose sword "on the adulterer struck the vengeful blow :

"As sails full spread and belying with the wind  
Drop, suddenly collapsed, if the mast split,  
So to the ground down dropp'd the cruel fiend."

—*Hell*, vii. 13.

Two separate divisions of the fourth circle contain the

avaricious and prodigal: they howl aloud as they roll enormous weights; at each half circle they dash against each other:

“And each one forthwith  
Roll’d them back, voluble, turning again,  
Exclaiming these, ‘Why holdest thou so fast?’  
Those answering, ‘And why castest thou away?’”  
—*Hell*, vii. 28.

Thus each, incessantly wheeling round, attacks and recoils, and in their punishment is symbolised their sin:

“Behold,” says Virgil, “my son! how brief, how vain,  
The goods committed into Fortune’s hands,  
For which the human race keep such a coil!  
Not all the gold that is beneath the moon,  
Or ever hath been, of these toil-worn souls  
Might purchase rest for one.”—*Hell*, vii. 62.

By a rugged path they descend to the fifth circle. Here are the violent, “naked, and with mire o’erspread,” in the Stygian marsh:

“They with their hands alone  
Struck not, but with the head, the breast, the feet,  
Cutting each other piecemeal with their fangs.”  
—*Hell*, vii. 115.

The sullen<sup>1</sup> lie immersed in boiling slime:

“Sad once were we,  
In the sweet air made gladsome by the sun,  
Carrying a foul and lazy mist within.”—*Hell*, vii. 124.

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<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, following Aristotle (*Eth.* iv. 5), distinguishes three kinds of wrathful men (*iracundi*): 1. The enraged (*acuti*), those who fly quickly into a passion and for the least cause. 2. The sullen (*amari*). 3. The obstinate (*difficiles*). In the two latter classes anger lasts for a long time. In the sullen, the sadness remains shut up in their hearts, for they evince no outward sign of irritation, and are, therefore, never open to advice. In the obstinate, the vehement desire of revenge keeps their anger alive. S. ii. 2. q. 185, a. 5.

They cannot speak, but the poet becomes aware of their suffering existence by the bubbling of the noisome waters which their gurgling and sighing brings to the surface. Among the proud here punished, Dante especially notes many princes and great men of the world :

“There above,  
How many now hold themselves mighty kings,  
Who here like swine shall wallow in the mire,  
Leaving behind them horrible dispraise !”

—*Hell*, viii. 47.

Phlegyas hastens from the other shore to greet the wanderers. As they sail across the lake, lost souls rise above the seething waters with arms outstretched to the poet, but are thrust back by the boatman. Dante now discerns from afar the city of Lucifer. Its towers glow with furnace-heat ; its walls of iron are surrounded by deep trenches ; thousands of demons guard its entrance ; on its lofty pinnacles appear the Furies :

“Around them greenest hydras twisting roll'd  
Their volumes, adders and cerastes crept  
Instead of hair, and their fierce temples bound.”

—*Hell*, ix. 41.

They call on Medusa, that the sight of her may change the poet into stone ; but Virgil thus warns him :

“Turn thyself round, and keep  
Thy countenance hid ; for if the Gorgon dire  
Be shown, and thou should'st view it, thy return  
Upwards would be for ever lost.”—*Hell*, ix. 56.

Dante, horror-struck, clings to his guide, and Virgil covers his eyes with both his hands. The earth trembles ; loud-crashing thunder rolls. Virgil uncovers Dante's eyes,

and an angel appears, before whom the demons flee in terror. Dryshod he crosses the Styx; the gate flees open at the touch of his wand, and then in silence he disappears. Dante himself calls our attention to the deeper meaning of this allegory; to the

"Lore conceal'd  
Under close texture of the mystic strain."

—*Hell*, ix. 63.

The city contained those who have sinned against the faith. Virgil could not gain admittance unaided, for reason alone cannot open man's heart to faith. The Furies and Medusa, that is, a bad conscience and obdurate, stony scepticism, are ever the cause of unbelief.

The poets enter between the lofty battlements and a long range of tombs. This is the sixth circle, that of the heretics. There, in coffins of flames with uncovered lids, lie the heresiarchs, with their followers of every sect. As they proceed discoursing, Farinata degli Uberti, a renowned leader of the Florentine Ghibellines, hearing Dante's voice, suddenly "from his girdle upwards" arises from his tomb. He reminds the poet of his triumphs against Dante's ancestors, the Guelfs:

"His breast and forehead there  
Erecting, seem'd as in high scorn he held  
E'en Hell."—*Hell*, x. 35.

Here lie buried Pope Anastasius II.,<sup>1</sup> and the Emperor

<sup>1</sup> Some commentators, Pozziali, Lombardi, and Tommaseo, think that Dante confounded Pope Anastasius with the Emperor, his contemporary and namesake; but it seems more probable that Pope Anastasius is here meant, and that Dante condemned him for favouring the heresy of Photinus, on account of a passage in Gratianus (*Deor.* i, dist. 19. 9), a book accounted in the Middle Ages as a high authority. Dr. Dollinger exposes Dante's error, and says of the Pope, "He was innocent and blameless as regards dogma." Cf. *Papstfabeln*, p. 124 et seq.



Frederic II.,<sup>1</sup> also many who, with Epicurus and his school, denied the immortality of the soul :

“Who with the body make the spirit die.”—*Hell*, x. 16.

Such is the fitting punishment of these souls. At the last day their coffins will be closed, and they will be forever buried in darkness and separated from God. The poet here introduces another touching episode into the ghastly picture. Whilst Farinata discourses with Dante on the changeful fortunes of their native city, the father of Guido, the friend of Dante's youth, Cavalcanti, the Guelf, uplifts himself. After searching vainly if there are others in the poet's company, he addresses Dante with tears :

“If thou through this blind prison goest,  
Led by thy lofty genius and profound,  
Where is my son ? and wherefore not with thee ?”

—*Hell*, x. 57.

From an expression used by Dante, the father gathers that his son is dead, falls back, and is seen no more.

In their twofold species, as sins of violence and of fraud, heresies form the transition between sins of infirmity and sins of malice. For heresy is at once rebellion, or violence against God, and also fraud, because the heretic makes divine truth subservient to his own human opinion, and thus leads the multitude astray. This class of sins belongs to the sixth circle, since the root of all heresy is pride and sensuality.

<sup>1</sup> Dante here only expresses the judgment of his time on Frederic II. That it was well founded is proved by the latest researches on the subject by Reuter, *Geschichte der Aufklärung im Mittelalter*, ii. p. 287.

<sup>2</sup> “The sects and heresies both belong to the works of the flesh, not indeed with regard to the act of infidelity considered in relation to its proximate object, but as regards their cause, which is the desire of an unlawful end, arising from pride or covetousness ; or from some delusion of the imagination ; for, as Aristotle says, the imagination is a source of error ; and it belongs in a way to the flesh, as its acts presuppose a bodily organ.”—S. ii. 2. q. 9, a. 1 ad 3.

On reaching the seventh circle, the poet enters lower Hell, the abode of those who sin from malice. The descent is by a precipitous chasm, full of rocky crags, formed by the earthquake which convulsed all Hell at the descent of our Lord, "who carried off from Dis the mighty spoil."<sup>1</sup> On the summit of the rent cleft lies the outstretched form of the Minotaur, who is the guardian of the seventh circle, and the type of blind rage :

"Like to a bull, that with impetuous spring  
Darts, at the moment when the fatal blow  
Hath struck him, but, unable to proceed,  
Plunges on either side; so saw I plunge  
The Minotaur."—*Hell*, xii. 21.

Here in three rounds are chastised those who have done violence against their neighbour, themselves, and God. The poet thus deplores their folly :

"O blind lust!  
O foolish wrath! who so dost goad us on  
In the brief life, and in the eternal then  
Thus miserably o'erwhelm us."—*Hell*, xii. 46.

The murderers are submerged in a torrent of boiling blood, in depth according to the measure of their guilt. Centaurs, "with keen arrows armed," shoot at any who attempt to raise themselves out of it. Here are also the tyrants<sup>2</sup> "who were given to blood and rapine."

Among these are Alexander<sup>3</sup> and Dionysius of Syracuse

<sup>1</sup> *Hell*, xii. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Dante defines (*De Monarch.* i. 12) a tyrant as one "who drives mankind into slavery," and he follows St. Thomas, who thus distinguishes tyrants from kings: "The kingdom is not for the king, but the king for the kingdom. For God has established them to rule and govern their kingdom, and to preserve each one in his right, and such is the end of government; if they act otherwise, and pervert their advantage to their own interest, they are not kings, but tyrants."—*De Regim. prin.* iii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> It is doubtful whether Alexander the Great, or the Tyrant of Phere in Thessaly, is here spoken of.

in ancient, Attila and Ezzelino in modern, times. The Centaur Nessus carries the poet across the stream of blood, and points to a spirit, by "itself apart," plunged up to the throat in the boiling wave. He is Guy de Montfort, who in 1271 stabbed Henry, son of Richard of Cornwall, at Viterbo, during the holy sacrifice of the Mass :

"He in God's bosom smote the heart  
Which yet is honour'd on the bank of Thames."  
—*Hell*, xii. 119.

The second round of this circle forms the place of punishment for the suicides, those who have laid violent hands on themselves. They outraged God and nature by destroying their bodies, and now are for ever deprived of them, their souls being imprisoned in trees. Nothing remains to them but sensation, that they may suffer eternally for their crime. The suicides form a vast forest, inhabited by Harpies :

"Not verdant there  
The foliage, but of dusky hue; not light  
The boughs and tapering, but with knares deform'd  
And matted thick; fruits there were none, but thorns  
Instead, with venom fill'd.

Here the brute Harpies make their nest;  
Broad are their pennons, of the human form  
Their neck and countenance, arm'd with talons keen  
The feet, and the huge belly fledg'd with wings:  
These sit and wail on the drear mystic wood.

On all sides  
I heard sad plaintings breathe, and none could see  
From whom they might have issued. In amaze  
Fast bound I stood.  
Thereat a little stretching forth my hand,  
From a great wilding gather'd I a branch,  
And straight the trunk exclaimed, 'Why pluck'st thou  
me?'

Then as the dark blood trickled down its side,  
 These words it added: 'Wherefore tear'st me thus?  
 Is there no touch of mercy in thy breast?  
 Men once were we, that now are rooted here,  
 Thy hand might well have spared us, had we been  
 The souls of serpents.' As a brand yet green  
 That burning at one end from the other, sends  
 A groaning sound and hisses with the wind  
 That forces out its way, so burst at once  
 Forth from the broken splinter words and blood.  
 I, letting fall the bough, remain'd as one  
 Assail'd by terror."—*Hell*, xiii. 3.

Among the souls here banished is Piero delle Vigne, Chancellor of the Emperor Frederic II., "who held both keys to Frederic's heart." Denounced by the courtiers through envy, "that common vice and pest of courts," he fell into disgrace and committed suicide. Thus he narrates his fall and his punishment:

"When departs  
 The fierce soul from the body, by itself  
 Thence torn asunder, to the seventh gulf  
 By Minos doom'd, into the wood it falls,  
 No place assigned, but wheresoever chance  
 Hurls it; there sprouting as a grain of spelt,  
 It rises to a sapling, growing thence  
 A savage plant. The Harpies, on its leaves  
 Then feeding, cause both pain, and for the pain  
 A vent to grief.<sup>1</sup> We, as the rest, shall come  
 For our own spoils, yet not so that with them  
 We may again be clad; for what a man  
 Takes from himself it is not just he have.  
 Here we perforce shall drag them, and throughout  
 The dismal glade our bodies shall be hung,  
 Each on the wild thorn of his wretched shade."

—*Hell*, xiii. 96.

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<sup>1</sup> While the hole in the bark is open, the imprisoned soul can sob through the cavity.

Others, who have squandered their fortunes and then slain themselves, flee naked and breathless through this forest of thorns, pursued by "black female mastiffs, gaunt and fleet," by whom they are overtaken, "rent piecemeal," and their tortured limbs borne away.

On leaving the forest, a desolate sandy heath is entered, where wander numerous "flocks" of naked spirits :

"O'er all the sand fell, slowly wafting down,  
Dilated flakes of fire, as flakes of snow  
On Alpine summit when the wind is hush'd.

. . . . .  
So fell the eternal fiery flood, wherewith  
The marble glow'd underneath, as under stove  
The viands, doubly to augment the pain.  
Unceasing was the play of wretched hands,  
Now this, now that way glancing, to shake off  
The heat, still falling fresh."—*Hell*, xiv. 25.

We are now in the third round, the Hell of those who have used violence against God, blasphemers, *peccatores contra naturam*, and usurers. Here lies, helpless and contorted, Capaneus, one of the seven kings "who girt the Theban walls with siege" and "held God in disdain."<sup>1</sup> Hurl'd to the ground and transfixed by the lightnings of divine justice, he still gazes upward in proud scorn, and exclaims to the poet :

"Such as I was  
When living, dead, such now I am. If Jove  
Weary his workmen out, from whom in ire  
He snatch'd the lightnings, that at my last day  
Transfix'd me; if the rest he weary out,  
At their black smithy labouring by turns,  
In Mongibello, while he cries aloud,  
'Help, help, good Mulciber!' as erst he cried  
In the Phlegrean warfare, and the bolts

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Statius, *Theb.* x. 845 *et seq.*

Launch he, full aim'd at me, with all his might,  
He never should enjoy a sweet revenge."<sup>1</sup>

—*Hell*, xiv. 47.

Virgil in reply reproves his blasphemy :

“Capaneus!

Thou art more punish'd in that this thy pride  
Lives yet unquench'd : no torment, save thy rage  
Were to thy fury pain proportion'd full.”

—*Hell*, xiv. 59.

Lucifer, in Byron's *Cain*, makes speech similar to that of  
Capaneus :

“No! by Heaven, which He  
Holds, and the abyss, and the immensity  
Of worlds and life, which I hold with Him—No!  
I have a victor—true, but no superior.  
Homage He has from all—but none from me:  
I battle it against Him, as I battled  
In highest Heaven. Through all eternity,  
And the unfathomable gulfs of Hades,  
And the interminable realms of space,  
And the infinity of endless ages,  
All—all, will I dispute! and world by world,  
And star by star, and universe by universe,  
Shall tremble in the balance, till the great  
Conflict shall cease, if ever it shall cease—  
Which it ne'er shall till He or I be quenched.”<sup>2</sup>

—*Act ii. Scene 2.*

<sup>1</sup> His words recall a similar passage in the *Prometheus Vincitus*, line 994 :

“Let then the blazing levin flash be hurled  
With white-winged snowstorm and with earth-born thunders ;  
Let him disturb and trouble all that is ;  
Nought of these things shall force me to declare  
Whose hand shall drive Him from His sovereignty.”—*Plumptre's Trans.*

<sup>2</sup> So St. Thomas : “The evil (reprobate) will never repent, strictly speaking, of their sins, for the evil will to sin remains in them.”—*S. Supp.* q. 98, a. 2.

Dante here recognises, in spite of his "parch'd looks, smirched with fire," his master, Brunetto Latini, who had been accused after death of a sin dishonouring alike to God and nature. Strong as was still Dante's affection for him, with inflexible justice he places Brunetto in Hell, among many other learned men condemned for the same crime. Yet most touchingly do his words express the scholar's gratitude and love for his master :

"In my mind  
Is fix'd, and now strikes full upon my heart,  
The dear benign paternal image, such  
As thine was, when so lately thou did'st teach me  
The way for man to win eternity;  
And how I prized the lesson, it behoves  
That long as life endures, my tongue should speak."

—*Hell*, xv. 81.

On the extreme brink of this seventh circle are the usurers ; they are seated, because they enriched themselves without effort, by the labour of others ; but they are tormented, both by a rain of fire which they strive in vain to ward off, and by the burning soil. Round the neck of each hangs an empty pouch, in mockery, and perpetual condemnation of their futile labours.

As the wayfarers approach the eighth circle, they hear the roar of a mighty torrent, the Phlegethon. Here, at Virgil's bidding, Dante loosens and gives him his girdle, which he casts into the abyss. At this signal the monster Geryon,<sup>1</sup> the ruler of this circle, that of the fraudulent, rises from the depths. His form is characteristic. Like the Harpies, he is half-man, half-beast, but in him the animal part is of a far lower type. The Centaur has the form of the noble horse, the Harpy partly that of a bird.

<sup>1</sup> According to the fable, Geryon was a giant-king with three bodies, who fed his oxen on the flesh of his friends, whom he treacherously murdered : he was slain by Hercules. Hesiod, *Theogon.* 287.

But this symbol of fraud combines the nature of the creeping snake and deadly scorpion, the lowest types of animal life. His countenance is that of an honest man, his body that of a writhing serpent with parti-coloured shining skin; his glittering tail ends in an envenomed fork; his sharp claws are concealed beneath soft hair. The whole figure is typical of the beginning, the middle, and the end of fraud. For the impostor seeks to captivate his victim by his gracious aspect, whilst he winds his coils around him, and at last darts out the fatal sting. This image is partly taken from mythology, partly from Holy Writ. In Genesis the serpent is described, as "more subtle than any of the beasts of the earth," and in the Apocalypse we read, "And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and *their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women*, and their teeth were as lions. And they had breastplates as breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was as the noise of chariots and many horses running to battle. And *they had tails like to scorpions*, and there were *stings in their tails.*"<sup>1</sup>

The way and means by which Virgil allures Geryon upwards with the coiled girdle of the poet, is altogether original. According to some, it is the symbol of vigilance: "Be your loins girt," &c.; or of justice: "And justice shall be the girdle of his loins;" or, again, of force: "When thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself, and didst walk where thou wouldest."<sup>2</sup> Possibly there is an allusion to the cord of the Franciscans, which, as we have already observed, Dante is said to have worn in his early youth, but laid aside before the end of his noviciate; hence, the throwing down of the cord may signify Dante's plunge into political life. If we accept the incident as historically true,

<sup>1</sup> Genesis iii. 1; Apoc. ix. 7, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xii. 35; Isaiah xl. 5; John xxi. 18.



it may mean that Geryon was to be allured by the hope of getting into his power a Franciscan, false and faithless to his rule. The cord, however, finds its best interpretation in the self-mortification by which Dante had hoped "fast-bound to take the painted leopard" of lust, but which, when absorbed in worldly cares and passions, he cast aside. The prayer with which the priest girds himself in his girdle for Mass is, in this latter sense, "Gird me, O Lord, with the girdle of chastity, and extinguish in my loins the poison of lust, that in me may abide the virtue of continence and chastity."<sup>1</sup>

The descent of Hell becomes more precipitous and the circles narrower, as they approach the abode of the fraudulent. The monster Geryon, forced to lend the "aid of his strong shoulders" to Virgil and Dante, bears them down into the abyss:

"Not greater was the dread when Phaëton  
The reins let drop at random, . . . .  
Than was my dread when round me on each part  
The air I view'd, and other object none  
Save the fell beast. He slowly sailing  
Wheels his downward motion, unobserved of me,  
But that the wind, arising to my face,  
Breathes on me from below. Now on our right  
I heard the cataract beneath us leap  
With hideous crash; whence bending down to explore,  
New terror I conceived at the steep plunge;  
For flames I saw, and wailings smote mine ear,  
So that, all trembling, close I crouch'd my limbs."

—*Hell*, xvii. 102.

They now find themselves in the eighth circle, called by Dante, Malebolge, "evil pits." Before them is a wide circular plain, outstretched between the precipice over which the Phlegethon plunges, and the deepest abyss of hell.

<sup>1</sup> So also Philaethes. Cf. Scartazzini in *loc.*

Of shelving form, it is traversed by ten circular and concentric trenches, each of which is girt by a wall of rock. Across each foss is thrown a bridge of rock, which serves as its portal, and each contains a different class of the fraudulent. The meaning of this image is clear. The violent who sin openly are placed in a wide plain, whilst the fraudulent are hidden in deep clefts; the more crafty the deceit, the deeper the foss. As a more hardened heart is required for fraud than for violence, these holes are hewn in rocks hard as iron.<sup>1</sup> Here the travellers proceed from right to left. In the upper circles, the spiral paths proceed from the left, to signify the open way of evil; in this circle, they wind from the right, to indicate that pretence of good which leads all the more surely down to the abyss.

In the first chasm Dante meets the panderers and the seducers, who defile past in long lines, in opposite directions, on either side of the trench, and are unceasingly lashed onward by demons. In the second trench are buried the flatterers. It is more profound than the first, for flattery is a more hidden evil.<sup>2</sup> So deep is this foss, that the poet has to mount the highest point of the bridge, to see the lost souls within. This is a picture of kingly courts and those higher circles of society, where flattery most abounds, and is most full of peril. As during life the flatterers have, by their praise of sin, like dogs, licked all that is foul, they are now immersed to the mouth in loathsome filth.<sup>3</sup> The stench is stifling, and with wide-stretched nostrils they snort for

<sup>1</sup> *Hell*, xviii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Flattery, according to St. Thomas, is opposed to charity in three ways. 1. By reason of the matter, when we praise any one for the crime he has committed. 2. By reason of the intention, when the purpose of the flattery is to injure another in body or soul. 3. By reason of the occasion, when the flattery becomes the occasion of another's sinning, even though this were not intended by the speaker. S. ii. 2. q. 115, a. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Hell*, xviii. 113.

breath, while with both hands they strike their head and face. Among these also are the harlots, such as Thais :

"Who there doth rend her with defiled nails,  
Now crouching down, now risen on her feet."

—*Hell*, xviii. 128.

These two sins, alike shameful and degrading to the dignity of man, are rightly classed together.

At the third bridge of rocks, Dante is terrified by the sight of human feet, projecting in many places from the stones below :

"On either foot

The soles were burning, whence the flexile joints  
Glanc'd with such violent motion as had snapt  
Asunder cords or twisted withes."—*Hell*, xix. 26.

These are the Simoniacs,<sup>1</sup> whose quivering limbs "expressed their pang." By sale or barter, they have degraded spiritual things and the priestly office for greed of gold, and have thus made the highest gifts subserve the lowest ends. They are therefore plunged head foremost into these holes, those of the same class being buried together. As example is an incentive to vice, the guilt of the first and bottommost sinner is greatest, and each in turn is forced down lower by the last comer. Among these Simoniacs are several Popes, whom Dante accuses, with burning words, of simony and nepotism. Yet he qualifies his harsh language by adding :

"If reverence of the keys restrain'd me not,  
Which thou in happier time didst hold, I yet  
Severer speech might use."—*Hell*, xix. 104.

St. Thomas teaches<sup>2</sup> that the Pope, like any other man, can fall into the sin of simony, and the higher his station, the greater his sin. He is the supreme administrator of the Church's property, but not its lord and possessor.

<sup>1</sup> Acts of the Apostles, viii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> S. ii. 2. q. 100, a. 1 ad 7.

In the fourth trench, with slow and mournful step, a great procession files slowly past :

“ Earnest I look’d  
 Into the depth, that open’d to my view,  
 Moistened with tears of anguish, and beheld  
 A tribe, that came along the hollow vale,  
 In silence weeping : such their step as walk  
 Quires, chanting solemn litanies, on earth.  
 As on them more direct mine eye descends,  
 Each wondrously seem’d to be reversed  
 At the neck-bone, so that the countenance  
 Was from the reins averted ; and because  
 None might before him look, they were compell’d  
 To advance with backward gait. Thus one perhaps  
 Hath been by force of palsy clean transposed,  
 But I ne’er saw it, nor believe it so.”—*Hell*, xx. 4.

At this sight the poet weeps, but is reproved by Virgil :

“ What, and art thou, too, witless as the rest ?  
 Here pity<sup>1</sup> most doth show herself alive,  
 When she is dead. What guilt exceedeth his,  
 Who with Heaven’s judgment in his passion strives ? ”<sup>2</sup>  
 —*Hell*, xx. 25.

Those who thus defile past, are the diviners, soothsayers, and astrologers, who strove by criminal means to penetrate

<sup>1</sup> *Pietà* has two senses—the love of God (*pietas*, *piété*) and pity (*pitié*).

<sup>2</sup> St. Catherine of Sienna expresses the same thought : “ As the Saints have united their wills entirely to the will of God, they recognize in the punishments inflicted, the just judgments of God, and grieve not thereat.”—*Dialog.* c. 41. So again St. Bernard : “ The love of the flesh must be absorbed in the love of the spirit, and our disordered affections changed into others that are divine.”—*De Dilig. Deo*, 3. St. Thomas thus explains the feelings of the Saints towards the lost souls : “ A thing can be a joy in two ways. 1. For itself, when one rejoices in the thing (*per se*) as such, and in this way the Saints do not rejoice in the sufferings of the wicked. 2. Indirectly (*per accidens*), on account of something else joined to it ; thus the Saints will rejoice in the sufferings of the wicked, considering in them the order of divine justice.”—S. Supp. q. 94, a. 2.

into the future, and are now for ever condemned to turn their faces backwards.

In a foss, overshadowed with a "marvellous darkness," are placed the corrupt officials. They are plunged into a sea of boiling pitch, from which, whenever they strive to emerge, they are attacked and torn by demons. The capricious, malignant, and treacherous nature of the fiends, who out of sheer malice thus torment their victims, fitly answers to the corrupt practices of the condemned.

Of 'no,'

"For lucre there an 'ay' is quickly made."<sup>1</sup>—*Hell*, *xxi.* 40.

Finally, the wayfarers are themselves deceived and beset by one of these mocking fiends.<sup>2</sup>

Virgil now conducts the poet down to the sixth trench :

"There in the depth we saw a painted tribe,  
Who paced with tardy steps around, and wept,  
Faint in appearance and o'ercome with toil,  
Caps had they on, with hoods, that fell low down  
Before their eyes, in fashion like to those  
Worn by the monks in Cologne. Their outside  
Was overlaid with gold, dazzling to view,  
But leaden all within, and of such weight,  
That Frederic's<sup>3</sup> compared to these were straw.  
O everlasting wearisome attire!"—*Hell*, *xxiii.* 58.

These are the hypocrites.<sup>4</sup> In life they affected a tardy gait, with eyes sanctimoniously cast down; in Hell also they pace with steps measured and sad, bowed down under the weight of their punishment. Across their path lies the high priest Caiphas. In concert with the Pharisees, out

<sup>1</sup> Del no, per il danar, vi si fa ita.

<sup>2</sup> *Hell*, *xxi.* 110, 128.

<sup>3</sup> Under Frederic II. persons condemned for high treason were encased, it is said, in a leaden shroud and then burned alive.

<sup>4</sup> *Matt.* *xxiii.* 27, *vii.* 16.

of feigned zeal for religion, he had decreed the death of our Lord, and now lies crucified himself upon three short stakes, which project from the stony ground. With him, in like manner, suffer Annas and the other guilty chiefs of the Sanhedrim. The hypocrites, as they pass round, trample them for ever underfoot.

Wearied to death is the poet, who is forced to clamber over huge masses of rock, in order to reach the two lowest chasms. But Virgil thus encourages him :

“ For not on downy plumes, nor under shade  
Of canopy reposing, fame is won,  
Without which whosoe’er consumes his days,  
Leaveth such vestige of himself on earth,  
As smoke in air or foam upon the wave.  
Thou therefore rise : vanquish thy weariness  
By the mind’s effort, in each struggle form’d  
To vanquish, if she suffer not the weight  
Of her corporeal frame to crush her down.”

—*Hell*, xxiv. 46.

Dante then descends into the seventh trench ; but what a sight opens before him !

“ I saw a crowd within  
Of serpents terrible, so strange of shape  
And hideous, that remembrance in my veins  
Yet shrinks the vital current.

Amid this dread exuberance of woe  
Ran naked spirits, wing’d with horrid fear ;  
No hope had they of crevice where to hide,  
Or heliotrope<sup>1</sup> to charm them out of view.  
With serpents were their hands behind them bound,  
Which through their reins infix’d the tail and head,  
Twisted in folds before.”—*Hell*, xxiv. 79.

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<sup>1</sup> “*Senza sperar portugio o elitropia.*” Literally, to find the stone called heliotrope, which was supposed to render its possessor invisible. *Boccaccio, Decam. viii. 3.*

These are the thieves, who are pursued, encircled, and transfixed by serpents. The reptile-torturers represent their sinful deeds and crafty ways. The thief is stripped of his own nature—his last possession—and transformed into a serpent; what his thieving habits made him, he has in fact become. Suddenly the serpent assaults him, and “more closely than the ivy clings to the tree” coils round him; they are fused together like wax, and mutually transformed, the serpent into the man, the man into the serpent.

Here also Dante discovers several of his countrymen, and thus in bitter irony upbraids his native city:

“Florence, exult! for thou so mightily  
Hast thriven, that o’er land and sea thy wings  
Thou beatest, and thy name spreads over Hell!  
Among the plunderers, such the three I found  
Thy citizens; whence shame to me, thy son,  
And no proud honour to thyself redounds.”

—*Hell*, xxvi. 1.

The eighth cleft discloses flames innumerable, which ascending upwards, devour the souls of those who have abused the higher gifts of intellect, by the evil counsels they have given. Their souls lie concealed, as was their advice, which prompted to evil deeds. Among them, Dante recognises Ulysses and Diomedes, who stole the palladium from the Temple of Minerva, the goddess of Wisdom. These two represent all who have misused the higher gifts of the intellect. Here also appears Guido da Montefeltro, who,<sup>1</sup> after having renounced the world and become a Franciscan, was said to have counselled Boniface VIII. to a breach of faith with the Colonna.

<sup>1</sup> The allusion is to a story, according to which Guido advised the Pope to guarantee the garrison of Palestrina their safety, but not to keep his promise (“di promettere assai, e di mantener poco”), for which the Pope granted him the remission of all his sins. The story is not mentioned by any contemporary writer, and is described by Tommaseo as a “*romanzo storico*,” which could only have originated in the mutual calumnies of the Guelfs and Ghibellines.

Guido tells Dante, that when he was numbered with the dead :

" Then came  
 St. Francis for me : but a cherub dark  
 He met, who cried, ' Wrong me not ; he is mine,  
 And must below to join the wretched crew  
 For the deceitful counsel which he gave.  
 E'er since I watched him, hovering at his hair.  
 No power can the impenitent absolve ;  
 Nor to repent, and will, at once consist,  
 By contradiction absolute forbid.'  
 O misery ! how I shook myself when he  
 Seized me, and cried, ' Thou haply thought'st me not  
 A disputant in logic so exact ! ' "—*Hell*, xxvii. 108.

In the ninth cleft, the heretics and leaders of rebellion are tormented by a demon, who, with his sword, hews their bodies asunder, and cuts off their tongues and hands. Their members are thus divided, because whilst living they disturbed unity, and separated those who were one in religion and politics. When they have passed round the circle, their wounds are healed ; but the demon's sword again strikes them, and thus their sufferings are for ever renewed. The body of Mahomet, the "great sectary," is rent asunder from head to foot. Caliph Ali, who founded a new Mahometan sect, is seen with his head split open ; and those who have set father against son, have their heads severed from the spine. Schismatics, either in word or deed, have their tongues and hands cut off. Fra Dolcino, an advocate of so-called Church reform and of plurality of wives, who was still living when the *Inferno* was written, is forewarned by Mahomet that he must shortly follow him hither. Here also is the tribune Curio. Expelled from Rome by the Senate, he sought Cæsar at Ariminum, and finding him deep in thought, doubtful whether or no to pass the Rubicon, and invade his native land, exclaimed,



"Do not hesitate; delay is always fatal to the soldier,"<sup>1</sup> which thereby enkindled a civil war. Here also is Mosca Lamberti, who advised the murder of Buondelmonti, and engaged Florence in the strife of Guelfs and Ghibellines.

Finally, in the tenth chasm are the falsifiers. They are divided into falsifiers of metals—forgers and coiners; falsifiers of speech—liars and calumniators; and falsifiers of individuals, those who deceitfully impersonated false characters. They lie covered with filth, and tormented by the most loathsome diseases:

"As were the torment, if each lazar-house  
Of Valdichiana, in the sultry time  
Twixt July and September, with the isle  
Sardinia and Maremma's pestilent fen,  
Had heaped their maladies all in one foss  
Together; such was here the torment: dire  
The stench, as issuing streams from fester'd limbs."  
—*Hell*, xxix. 44.

Here are the coiners in the last agonies of dropsy; the calumniators, such as Pytiphar's wife, in burning fever; they mutually abuse and strike each other. The fever-stricken and dropsical are drawn with astonishing truthfulness, and bring before us figures from the hospitals, which Dante probably frequented. As he lingers, watching the strife, he is warned by Virgil to hasten onward:

"And if again  
Chance bring thee where like conference is held,  
Think I am ever at thy side.<sup>2</sup> To hear  
Such wrangling is a joy for vulgar minds."

—*Hell*, xxx. 142.

We have reached the ninth and lowest circle, which contains those who have been guilty of treachery. Through

<sup>1</sup> "Tolle moras; nocuit semper differre paratis."—Lucan, *Phars.* lib. i. v. 281.

<sup>2</sup> To chide thee.

the "gross and gloomy atmosphere" Dante dimly discerns forms which appear to be lofty towers. He asks :

"Master, what land is this?"

Virgil replies :

"Thou hast widely err'd  
In thy imagining. . . . .  
. . . . . These are not towers,  
But giants. In the pit they stand immersed."

*Hell, xxxi. 21.*

The huge size of the giants symbolises the enormity of their crimes. With half of their bodies above the water, they stand round the brink of the "well," that is, the deep abyss which leads down to the last circle. Dante, as he gazes at them, rejoices that Nature no longer produces such beings as these, in whom "brute force and evil will are back'd by subtlety." They are types of all who by treachery and force have sinned against God, and the two divinely ordained rulers of men, the Pope and the Emperor. Here is Nimrod, to whom the poet attributes the building of the Tower of Babel. As that outrage was punished by the confusion of tongues, Nimrod's speech is inarticulate and unintelligible. Enraged that mortals should dare to descend into these regions, he sounds his horn, and Hell trembles at the blast. Here are Ephialtes, who thought to storm Heaven by heaping Olympus, Ossa, and Pelion one upon another; Briareus, with a hundred arms; Antæus, invincible on his mother-earth, but who, borne aloft by Hercules, was thus vanquished by him. Antæus takes the wanderers in his arms, and places them at the bottom of the circle.

The Cocytus, the fourth stream of Hell, here forms a vast sea of ice, "whose frozen surface liker seem'd to glass than water."<sup>1</sup> The atmosphere is grey and gloomy; a

<sup>1</sup> *Hell, xxxii. 23.*

piercing cold pervades the narrow space ; within its four divisions, the traitors are plunged in depths, varying according to the blackness and unnatural character of their crime. These wretched souls, the farthest removed from God, lie stiffened in cold egotism, ice-bound, and knit together so fast that

“ Plank unto plank hath never cramp closed up  
So stoutly.”—*Hell*, xxxii. 47.

Their tears are frozen as they flow, and thus form a veil.  
Hence Alberigo's entreaty :

“ From this face remove  
The harden'd veil, that I may vent the grief  
Impregnate at my heart, some little space,  
Ere it congeal again.”—*Hell*, xxxiii. 109.

Meanwhile they burn with mutual rage and hate, and with fiendish malice relate to the poet the crimes of their fellows. But they are fully conscious of the baseness of their treachery, and whilst in the upper circles of Hell the lost souls still long to be remembered on earth, the traitors desire that their names may never there be uttered.

The first division is Caina, the city of Cain ; it contains the traitors to their kindred. The second division, Antenora, so-called from Antenor the Trojan, who betrayed his native city to the Greeks, holds traitors to their country. The third division is Ptolomæa, so-called from Ptolemy, who treacherously murdered Judas Maccabeus and his sons at a feast, to which he had invited them. This is the prison of traitors to their friends. Within the fourth division, Giudecca, the city of Judas, are confined traitors to their benefactors.

Through the dark ice-bound lake, trembling with horror, the poet advances. In the first two divisions, the wretched

sinners lie with faces to the ground ; in the other two—a still harder penance—with faces upturned :

“ There, very weeping suffers not to weep,  
For at their eyes, Grief, seeking passage, finds  
Impediment, and rolling inward, turns  
For increase of deep anguish : the first tears  
Hang cluster'd, and like crystal vizors show,  
Under the socket brimming all the cup.”

—*Hell*, xxxiii. 94.

This second division is peopled by the poet with personages noted in the history of Italy and Florence, and in the feuds of the Guelfs and Ghibellines. On the borders of Antenora and Ptolomæa he is confronted by a terrible spectacle. In one hole, two figures are frozen together ; one of these, as he lies uppermost, hides the other from view ; and, like some hungry dog, gnaws his skull. The former is Count Ugolino della Gherardesca ; the latter, Archbishop Ruggieri of Pisa. The poet inquires Ugolino's name, and bribes him to answer by the promise, not of fame for himself, but of infamy for his enemy :

“ O thou who show'st so beastly sign of hate  
'Gainst him thou prey'st on, let me hear, said I,  
The cause, on such condition, that if right  
Warrant thy grievance, knowing who ye are,  
And what the colour of his sinning was,  
I may repay thee in the world above.”

—*Hell*, xxxii. 130.

“ His jaws uplifting from their fell repast,  
That sinner wiped them on the hairs o' the head,  
Which he behind had mangled, then began :  
'Thy will obeying, I call up afresh  
Sorrow past cure ; which, but to think of, wrings  
My heart, or ere I tell on't. But if words,  
That I may utter, shall prove seed to bear  
Fruit of eternal infamy to him,  
The traitor whom I gnaw at, thou at once

Shalt see me speak and weep. Who thou mayst be  
 I know not, nor how here below art come :  
 But Florentine thou seemest of a truth  
 When I do hear thee. Know I was on earth  
 Count Ugolino, and the Archbishop he  
 Ruggieri. Why I neighbour him so close,  
 Now list."—*Hell*, xxxiii. 1.

Ugolino, Count della Gherardesca, chief of the Guelphs and lord of Pisa, shared that dignity with Nino Visconti, his nephew. In order to maintain his power, Ugolino treacherously broke the truce with Genoa, and thus prevented the Pisans there captive, and whom he feared, regaining their liberty. Meanwhile the old party of the Ghibellines rose in arms under Ruggieri degli Ubaldini, Archbishop of Pisa, with Gualandi, Sismondi, and Lanfranchi, and with them, to be rid of his powerful rival Visconti, Ugolino now sought an alliance. In the intoxication of power, he murdered in a fit of rage one of his own kinsmen, who was also the Archbishop's nephew. When the corpse of the murdered man was brought before the Archbishop, he is said to have exclaimed, "This cannot be my nephew. The Count had no motive that I know of, for putting my nephew to death." His revenge, however, was only delayed to a more opportune moment. The treaty of alliance was signed, and Visconti banished. But upon Ugolino's refusal to share his power with the Archbishop, a civil war ensued, in which the former was defeated and taken prisoner, with his two sons, Gaddo and Uguccione, and two grandsons, Nino and Anselmuccio. All five were imprisoned, and left to die by starvation in the Tower de' Gualandi. At the end of eight days, the door was unbarred, and the victims buried with their feet still in fetters.<sup>1</sup> Such

<sup>1</sup> In consequence of this crime the Archbishop was thrice summoned to Rome, and condemned in *contumaciam*. Baldo, *Vita di Dante*, i. 6.

is the historical basis for the following stanzas, which Goethe ranks among the sublimest creations of poetry :

“That through effect of his ill thoughts,  
In him my trust reposing, I was taken  
And after murder'd, need is not I tell.  
What therefore thou canst not have heard, that is,  
How cruel was the murder, shalt thou hear,  
And know if he have wrong'd me. A small grate  
Within that mew, which for my sake the name  
Of famine bears, where others yet must pine,  
Already through its opening several moons  
Had shown me, when I slept the evil sleep  
That from the future tore the curtain off.  
This one, methought, as master of the sport,  
Rode forth to chase the gaunt wolf and his whelp  
Unto the mountain which forbids the sight  
Of Lucca to the Pisan. With lean brachs  
Inquisitive and keen, before him ranged  
Lanfranchi with Sismondi and Gualandi.  
After short course, the father of the sons  
Seem'd tired and lagging, and methought I saw  
The sharp tusks gore their sides. When I awoke  
Before the dawn, amid their sleep I heard  
My sons—for they were with me—weep and ask  
For bread. Right cruel art thou, if no pang  
Thou feel at thinking what my heart foretold;  
And if not now, why use thy tears to flow?  
Now they had waken'd, and the hour drew near  
When they were wont to bring us food; the mind  
Of each misgave him through his dream, and I  
Heard, at its outlet underneath lock'd up  
The horrible tower: whence, uttering not a word,  
I look'd upon the visage of my sons.  
I wept not: so all of stone I felt within.  
They wept: and one, my little Anselm, cried,  
'Thou lookest so! father; what ails thee?' Yet  
I shed no tear, nor answered all that day  
Nor the next night, until another sun  
Came out upon the world. When a faint beam  
Had to our doleful prison made its way,

And in four countenances I descried  
 The image of my own, on either hand  
 Through agony I bit; and they, who thought  
 I did it through desire of feeding, rose  
 O' the sudden, and cried, 'Father, we should grieve  
 Far less, if thou would'st eat of us: thou gavest  
 These weeds of miserable flesh we wear,  
 And do thou strip them off from us again.'  
 Then, not to make them sadder, I kept down  
 My spirit in stillness. That day and the next  
 We all were silent. Ah, obdurate earth!  
 Why open'dst not upon us? When we came  
 To the fourth day, then Gaddo at my feet  
 Outstretch'd did fling him, crying, 'Hast no help  
 For me, my father?' There he died; and e'en  
 Plainly as thou seest me, saw I the three  
 Fall one by one 'twixt the fifth day and the sixth,  
 Whence I betook me, now grown blind, to grope  
 Over them all, and for three days aloud  
 Call'd on them who were dead. Then, fasting got  
 The mastery of grief."—*Hell*, xxxiii. 16.

The moonlight through the narrow opening of his prison alone marks the time. In a dream Ugolino sees his enemies, as thirsty bloodhounds, gnaw from his bones the living flesh, signifying the pangs of hunger of which he and his must die. Escape is hopeless. Lucca, to whom he had betrayed the Pisan fortresses, will not attempt his rescue. His sons dream also of their coming doom, and weep and call for bread.

The hollow blows of the hammer tell him that his prison, like a coffin, is being nailed down. He alone hears and understands the sounds. He does not speak, but gazes on his children dying before his eyes; the intensity of his suffering is revealed in that look. "Thou lookest so, father; what ails thee?" asks Anselm. Still silent, he is as one turned to stone. Another day dawns and discovers their five famished faces; in despair he gnaws his hands.

His sons think he is striving to appease his hunger, and with entreaties offer their flesh to feed him. "Father! we should grieve far less, if thou would'st eat of us!" Their words bring Ugolino to himself. That day and the next they all were silent, the father utterly crushed, the sons wrestling with death. The catastrophe approaches. On the fourth day, Gaddo, whom, as the youngest, death claims the first, falls prostrate at his father's feet. He asks not for bread, for the pangs of hunger are past, but his father's silence and supineness are strange and terrible, and, with the almost reproachful plaint, "Hast no help for me, my father!" he dies. His four loved children thus cruelly one by one expire. At length his own end draws near; he is blind, but regains his speech, and for two whole days calls aloud to his children. He staggers round, groping over each in turn, sustained by his very anguish. At last "fasting got the mastery of grief." Ugolino's narrative is ended. It had but inflamed his rage and pain. With redoubled fury he fastens again upon his foe.

We have reached the fourth division, the city of Judas. Here are the traitors to their benefactors, who are wholly immersed in the icy flood:

"Whelm'd underneath, transparent, as through glass,  
Pellucid the frail stem. Some prone were laid;  
Others stood upright, this upon the soles,  
That on his head, a third with face to feet  
Arch'd like a bow."—*Hell*, xxxiv. 12.

Here, in the midst of the Giudecca, and in the very centre of the earth, is the seat of Satan. The archfiend was precipitated from Heaven into this abyss, by the crushing weight of his guilt. The most radiant of God's angels, "eminent in beauty once," in return for this plenitude of divine gifts, rebelled against his Creator. The one source of all evil, in his giant form and hideous aspect he appears



the incarnation of sin. The poet but partially describes his huge proportions ; the rest we must imagine. He stands out breast-high from the ice-bound Cocytus : the upper portion of his gigantic form, towering upwards into infernal space, has three faces, one fiery red, another of pallid hue, the third coal-black. These represent the three then known quarters of the globe, Europe, Asia, and Africa, for in them all this "Emperor, who sways the realm of sorrow," has slaves. His triple face is also in a sense a monstrous and infernal antithesis to the Most Holy Trinity, whom Dante on the threshold of Hell describes as supreme Power, Wisdom, and Love. Hence one face is red with rage, the rage of the violent against God. Another is black as night, for the pall of ignorance has extinguished the light of grace. The third is ghastly white, where pallid envy has blanched the bright hue of love. Once pre-eminent among the Seraphim, like them he has three pairs of mighty wings, but they are hideous and like those of a bat. When he unfolds them to raise himself from his fetters, the icy currents they produce freeze the lake still harder :

" At six eyes he wept : the tears  
Adown three chins distill'd with bloody foam.  
At every mouth his teeth a sinner champ'd,  
Bruised as with ponderous engine ; so that three  
Were in this guise tormented. But far more  
Than from that gnawing, was the foremost pang'd  
By the fierce rending, whence oftentimes the back  
Was stript of all its skin. 'That upper spirit,  
Who hath worst punishment,' so spake my guide,  
'Is Judas, he that hath the head within  
And plies the feet without. Of th' other two,  
Whose heads are under, from the murky jaw  
Who hangs, is Brutus ; lo ! how he doth writhe  
And speaks not. The other Cassius, that appears  
So large of limb.'"—*Hell*, xxxiv. 49.

As Church and State are the two divinely appointed

institutions for man's guidance,<sup>1</sup> therefore Judas, who betrayed Christ, the Divine Founder of the Church, and Brutus and Cassius, who betrayed Caesar, the founder of the Empire, are the vilest of all traitors. They are tormented by him who first of all betrayed Almighty God Himself,—Satan, the arch traitor, from whom all treachery in the world proceeds, and upon whom rests the whole weight of its guilt.

From this central point the wanderers now mount upwards to the other hemisphere, toiling along a dark and rocky hollow, whose tortuous windings typify the arduous struggle out of sin :

"Till on our view the beautiful lights of Heaven  
Dawned through a circular opening in the cave;  
Thence issuing, we again beheld the stars."

—*Hell*, xxxiv. 131.

With the word "stars," as the true goal of the just, each one of the three poems, the *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso* concludes.

And now, why has the poet brought before us these awful images of the lost souls in torment? In order that we may gaze upon evil in its true aspect,<sup>2</sup> the crimes of Emperors and Popes, of rich and poor, of high and low, of individuals and of nations, and the unfailing retribution which overtakes them. Therefore in the prominent figures of history, especially of Italy, from Æneas down to the conflicts of the Guelfs and Ghibellines, Dante shows us the hideousness of sin and its fearful chastisements. And his choice of the objects of God's vengeance is dictated by no local, narrow, personal, or party feeling; he had taken his stand apart.<sup>3</sup> Guelfs and Ghibellines meet with equal justice at his hands; he places Farinata degli Uberti, the

<sup>1</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> "The mighty shall be mightily tormented."—*Wisd.* vi. 7.

<sup>3</sup> "Fatta parte per se stesso."

Ghibelline leader, by the side of Cavalcante the Guelf, Ugolino with Ruggieri, Boniface VIII. with the Emperor Frederic II., and Ubaldini, the Ghibelline Cardinal, who is said to have sacrilegiously exclaimed, "If I ever had a soul, I lost it in the Ghibelline cause." <sup>1</sup>

Another characteristic follows from the foregoing. There is scarcely a female figure in the *Inferno*; of heathen women there are only the most depraved—Thais, Cleopatra, Myrrha; of Christian women, one alone, Francesca da Rimini; while in the *Purgatorio* we find many noble women of Roman and Grecian history. Yet the poet could as easily have drawn with a few incisive strokes the portraits of faithless and cruel women, as Marozia and Brunehild; but his mission was to man, not to woman, and his words were primarily addressed to those in high places, to the leaders of the people. In their abuse of the power entrusted to them, Dante sees the root of all those evils under which Italy and mankind groaned. Not that he ignores the hidden, but powerful, influence of Christian women upon the morals and the development of nations, for he had himself experienced it; and in Beatrice, he had devoted the whole force of his genius, and the melody of his verse, to the glorification of Christian womanhood.

In the imagery of Hell, Balbo and many commentators see reproduced the rude barbarous notions of the Middle Ages. But surely they are mistaken. Dante drew the main lines of his figures wholly from the Sacred Scriptures. For example, he recognises natural goodness even in the lost, especially in his tutor, Brunetto Latini, in the Chancellor Pietro delle Vigne, whom he undertook to vindicate in the opinion of posterity. Only in the lowest circles of Hell, where the will hardened in guilt, so nearly approaches the Satanic nature, does he withhold his pity. The predominant thought throughout

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Fraticelli on *Inf.* x. 20.

the various circles of the lost souls is none other than that expressed in Holy Writ: "The wicked shall be punished according to his own devices" (*Wisd.* iii. 10). "A greater punishment is ready for the more mighty" (*Wisd.* vi. 9). Indeed, chastisement itself is only the consequence of sin, the true offspring of its sinful parent, the one evil in the physical, as sin is the one evil in the moral world.<sup>1</sup>

Now, did Dante himself believe his Hell to have a real existence, or did he regard it simply as the creation of his imagination, reflecting as in a mirror the condition of the wicked upon earth?<sup>2</sup> We must make this distinction. The actual images of its torments are the poet's own work; but the idea of the retributive justice of God eternally rejecting the impenitent sinner, the notion of the punishment varying with the sin, are doctrines intimately and necessarily bound up in the poet's belief in God, and with it they stand or fall. Now Dante was a thorough man, but before all a thorough Christian. One single mortal sin, therefore, suffices to plunge even the patriot, the philosopher, the statesman into Hell, however distinguished he may have been in life, or honoured in death. This triumph of divine justice,<sup>3</sup> before which all that is

<sup>1</sup> Cf. S. i. 2. q. 87, a. 1.

<sup>2</sup> As Ruth holds, p. 261, *et passim*.

<sup>3</sup> "Now the proper office of punishment is twofold: he who is rightly-punished ought either to become better and profit by it, or he ought to be made an example to his fellows, that they may see what he suffers, and pray and become better; those who are punished by God and men, and improved, are those whose sins are curable; still the way of improving them, as in this world, so also in another, is by pain and suffering; for there is no other way in which they can be delivered from their evil. But they who have been guilty of the worst crimes, and are incurable by reason of their crimes, are made examples; for as they are incurable, the time has passed at which they can receive any benefit to themselves. But others get good when they behold them for ever enduring the most terrible, and painful, and fearful sufferings, as the penalty of their sins; there they are, hanging up as examples in the prison-house of the world below, a spectacle and a warning to all unrighteous men who come hither."—*Plato, Gorgias*, § 526, Jowett's trans.

best in man, his feelings of compassion, of love, must bow in silence, constitutes the greatness of the *Commedia* :

"Justice the Founder of my fabric moved."—*Hell*, iii. 4.

The power of the Father, the wisdom of the Son, the love of the Holy Ghost co-operated to produce the eternal torments of Hell.

## CHAPTER V.

## PURGATORY.

THE abyss of Hell was created, as we have seen, by the fall of Satan and the rebel angels on to the terrestrial world. The corresponding mass of earth, displaced by that fall and projected in the western hemisphere, forms the Mount of Purification. It is the only land visible above the then untraversed sea, which covers that half of the earth's surface. The summit is crowned by the earthly Paradise, on which, since Adam's fall, no mortal eye has gazed. Here in his original state of innocence and justice he dwelt, until driven forth by his own act into the depths of misery, which still encompass our earthly life. This Mount, the scene of man's first sin, is the exact antipodes to Mount Calvary,<sup>1</sup> where was offered the sacrifice for his redemption, and Paradise re-opened to the human race. But only by effort and toil, by penal chastisement, and cleansing penance, can Paradise be regained. Accordingly, the place of purification is described as a lofty and precipitous mountain of conical form, surrounded on all sides by steep banks shelving down to the sea.<sup>2</sup>

Like Hell, Purgatory consists of three principal divisions. The vestibule of Hell corresponds to that of Purgatory; the circles of those who sinned through malice and frailty,

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* iv. 65-71.<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* i. 114.

to the penances of souls here purged from the seven deadly sins ; Giudecca, the lowest abyss of Hell, finds its counterpart in the heights of the earthly Paradise ; and to the nine circles of Hell correspond the nine degrees of purification, by which the souls in Purgatory are gradually perfected.

Purgatory is the antithesis to Hell, the latter being a conical cavity, Purgatory a conical mount. In Hell the circles grow narrower and more appalling, as they descend towards the seat of Lucifer ; the ascending steps which gird the Mount of Purgatory shine more brightly and shed more hope, as each upward stage is gained. The deeper we descend into Hell, the more heinous are the sins chastised, and fewer the number of the sinners ; but in Purgatory, the higher we mount, the lighter are the sins there expiated. In Hell, the lost are condemned eternally to the torments of their respective circles ; the souls in Purgatory, on the contrary, ascend one by one the successive steps of penance. In Hell, sensuality is the first sin punished ; in Purgatory, it is the last for which satisfaction is exacted. In Hell reigns night perpetual, illumined only by the fiery battlements of the infernal city ; woes, curses, and lamentations resound ; gloomy caverns, lakes of seething pitch, or hard frozen ice, alone meet the eye. In Purgatory, the poet is cheered by the soft radiance of the stars and the clear light of day ; sweet harmonies float upwards, like an organ's distant strains ; shady groves and flowery meads, watered by refreshing streams, enchant the sight. Instead of Charon, with hard, forbidding mien, a benignant angel conducts the pilgrims from the estuary of the Tiber to the Mount of Purification. Finally, whilst the victims of divine justice dash themselves in despair against the dread portal of Hell, the redeemed spirits intone songs of thanksgiving, as they safely land on the purifying shore. In Hell, the sole end of suffering is

punishment; in Purgatory, suffering is rather "solace than pain,"<sup>1</sup> for it leads to bliss eternal.<sup>2</sup>

What then, in Dante's scheme, is the purpose of Purgatory? His journey through Hell had inspired him with the fear of God's wrath, with a desire to win, by daily penance for his sins, the "sweet fruit"<sup>3</sup> which that stern lesson should bear. This desire can be accomplished by the means of grace which Christ has granted to His Church. On the threshold of Purgatory the poet stands, therefore, penitent and ripe for justification.

The first eight cantos describe his sojourn in the vestibule of Purgatory, among those who may not yet ascend its steps, because they were negligent in God's service, and delayed their repentance until the hour of death. In the ninth canto, the poet has reached the three steps which lead to Purgatory itself. How he came thither he knows not, until Virgil informs him:

"Fear not," my master cried,  
"Assured we are at happy point. Thy strength  
Shrink not, but rise dilated. Thou art come  
To Purgatory now. Lo! there the cliff

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* xxiii. 66.

<sup>2</sup> "I do not believe that it would be possible to find any joy comparable to that of a soul in Purgatory, except the joy of the blessed in Paradise,—a joy which goes on increasing day by day, as God flows in more and more upon the soul, which He does abundantly, in proportion as every hindrance to His entrance is consumed away. . . . On the other hand, they suffer pains so great that no tongue can describe them" (ch. ii.) "When the soul leaves the body, and finds itself out of that state of purity in which it was created, seeing the hindrance, and that it can only be removed by Purgatory, it unhesitatingly plunges therein; and were no such means provided to remove the impediment, it would forthwith beget within itself a Hell worse than Purgatory, on finding itself thus impeded from reaching God, its last end."—*St. Catherine of Genoa, Treatise on Purgatory*, ch. vii. "In these matters concerning Purgatory, which have not been determined by the Church, the sayings and revelations of the Saints are our best guide."—*St. Thomas*, in *iv. Sent.*, dist. 21. q. 1, a.

<sup>3</sup> *Hell*, xvi. 62.



That circling bounds it. Lo! the entrance there  
 Where it doth seem disparted. Ere the dawn  
 Usher'd the daylight, when thy wearied soul  
 Slept in thee, o'er the flowery vale beneath  
 A lady came, and thus bespake me: 'I  
 Am Lucia. Suffer me to take this man  
 Who slumbers. Easier so his way shall speed.'

—*Purg.* ix. 42.

Thus in Lucia prevenient grace comes to the poet's assistance, and enables him of his own free-will to make those acts of faith, fear, hope, love, and repentance<sup>1</sup> which predispose him for justifying grace, and which are beyond his natural power.<sup>2</sup> Dante, therefore, now is able to mount the three steps which lead to the gate of Purgatory; that is, to perform the three acts of examen of conscience, contrition, and purpose of amendment. On the threshold sits an angel, who represents the confessor; kneeling before him, the poet thrice strikes his breast, the sign of a sincere confession. The angel holds the keys which he has received from St. Peter;<sup>3</sup> the silver key typifies the science by which the confessor judges of the penitent's worthiness; the other, of gold, signifies the precious merits of Christ, which purchased justifying grace for man. With these keys, the gate is opened to the poet:

<sup>1</sup> "Men are disposed to the gift of justice itself, if stirred and aided by divine grace, conceiving faith from hearing, they are freely moved to God, believing those things to be true which are divinely revealed and promised, and first of all, that the wicked man is justified by God through His grace, by the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; and if, recognising they are sinners, from the fear of divine justice, by which they are profitably terrified, they apply themselves to consider God's mercy, they are built up in hope, trusting that God will be propitious to them for Christ's sake, and begin to love Him as the source of all justice, and are therefore moved against sin by a certain hatred and detestation of it, that is, by that penance which ought to be done before baptism."—*Conc. Trid.* Sess. vi. cap. 6. Cf. Sess. vi. Can. 8.

<sup>2</sup> "For in sin a man is dead, as a corpse, into which the soul must be breathed anew, in order to raise it to life."—S. i. 2. q. 109, a. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xvi. 19.

“ With the pallid first,  
And next the burnish'd, he so ply'd the gate,  
As to content me well.”—*Purg.* ix. 110.

Nor is this a merely fanciful metaphor. Of the twofold office of the confessor, St. Thomas says, “ As the acts of the keys demand fitting dispositions in the penitent on whom they are exercised, for by the keys the judge admits the worthy, and excludes the unworthy, so he himself requires judicious discernment, in order to decide on their fitness. And for these two acts a certain power, or authority, is required. Hence arises the distinction of the two keys. The one refers to the judgment on the fitness of the penitent to be absolved, the other to the absolution itself. These two keys are not distinguished in the essence of the authority (conferred), for both belong to the judge *ex officio*, but with regard to his acts, of which one presupposes the other.”<sup>1</sup> Now that the sinner is pardoned and justified, Purgatory has to fulfil its work in him by effacing all the relics of sin.<sup>2</sup> To these belong, first, its temporal punishment, which may remain after the guilt is absolved. Therefore the angel with the point of his sword, traces seven times the letter P upon the poet's brow, which letters are to be effaced, one by one, as he climbs the seven ascents of the Mount. Nor is this all. The sinner has contracted habits of sin; his passions have become stronger, his moral force weaker, his capacity for good works considerably lessened. This weak-

<sup>1</sup> S. Supp. q. 17, a. 5.

<sup>2</sup> “The Holy Synod declares, that it is false and altogether foreign to the Word of God, that guilt is never remitted by God without a complete condonation of the punishment due. . . . Divine justice seems to demand that those, who have sinned through ignorance before baptism, should be received into grace upon conditions, other than are imposed upon those, who having been once freed from the slavery of sin and the devil, and having received the gift of the Holy Spirit, have not feared knowingly to violate the temple of God and to grieve the Holy Spirit. . . . Satisfactory punishment both heals the relics of sin and destroys the vicious habits acquired by an evil life, by contrary acts of virtue.”—*Conc. Trid.*, Sess. xiv. *De Sac. Pœnit.* cap. 8.

ness of the soul must be healed, its moral strength gradually regained, the power of evil habits diminished by the penitential process, which is described in the following lines :

“ Such is this steep ascent,  
That it is ever difficult at first,  
But more a man proceeds, less evil grows.  
When pleasant it shall seem to thee, so much  
That upward going shall be easy to thee,  
As in a vessel to go down the tide,  
Then of this path thou wilt have reach'd the end.  
There hope to rest thee from thy toil.”—*Purg.* iv. 85.

The poet, as he follows his guide up the steep ascent, exclaims :

“ I, wearied, thus began : ‘ Parent beloved !  
Turn and behold how I remain alone,  
If thou stay not.’ ”—*Purg.* iv. 42.

But as he mounts higher, both desire and strength increase :

“ Within me straight  
Desire so grew upon desire to mount,  
Thenceforward at each step I felt the wings  
Increasing for my flight.”—*Purg.* xxvii. 120.

As he leaves each circle, and a P is removed by the angel, the poet, though unconscious of the fact, feels his strength renewed, and the angel's form appears ever brighter and more beautiful :

“ We climb the holy stairs :  
And lighter to myself by far I seem'd  
Than on the plain before ; whence thus I spake :  
‘ Say, master, of what heavy thing have I  
Been lighten'd, that scarce aught the sense of toil  
Affects me journeying ? ’<sup>1</sup> He in few replied :

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<sup>1</sup> When one sin disappears—and pride, too, was Dante's chief sin—all other sinful inclinations grow less. So St. Bonaventure. “When one

'When sin's broad characters, that yet remain,  
 Upon thy temples, though well-nigh effaced,  
 Shall be, as one is, all clean razed out,  
 Then shall thy feet by heartiness of will  
 Be so o'ercome, they not alone shall feel  
 No sense of labour, but delight much more  
 Shall wait them, urged along their upward way.'  
 Then like to one, upon whose head is placed  
 Somewhat he deems not of, but from the becks  
 Of others, as they pass him by; his hand  
 Lends therefore help to assure him, searches, finds,  
 And well performs such office as the eye  
 Wants power to execute; so stretching forth  
 The fingers of my right hand, did I find  
 Six only of the letters, which his sword,  
 Who bare the keys, had traced upon my brow.  
 The leader, as he mark'd mine action, smiled."

—*Purg.* xii. 107.

Thus, gradually by penance, we are freed from the slavery  
 of sinful desires and habits, and regain moral freedom :

"In the search  
 Of liberty<sup>1</sup> he journeys: that how dear,  
 They know who for her sake have life refused."

—*Purg.* i. 70.

But this freedom the poet only attains fully in the  
 heavenly Paradise :

"Of slave<sup>2</sup>  
 Thou hast to freedom brought me: and no means  
 For my deliverance apt, hast left untried."<sup>3</sup>

—*Par.* xxxi. 75.

virtue increases, all increase, as we see in a lyre, in which to produce  
 a due proportion of sounds, all the strings must be tuned together or  
 harmony becomes discord." *Compend. Theol.* v. 7.

<sup>1</sup> He calls liberty elsewhere "the sweet fruit" (*Hell*, xvi. 61), and  
 in Purgatory "peace" (*Purg.* xxiv. 139).

<sup>2</sup> "For by whom a man is overcome, of the same also he is the slave."  
 —2 *Pea.* ii. 19.

<sup>3</sup> "The first principle of our freedom is freedom of will, and of this  
 many speak but few understand. . . . If the judgment moves the

The strife which we experience between the flesh and the spirit is due only to sin.<sup>1</sup> As man came forth from his Maker's hand clothed with original justice, his body, free from all disordered movement, was not a heavy fetter on the soul, but its docile instrument. His lower appetites and his affections, supernaturally purified, were alike subject to reason, which again was never obscured by ignorance, but so enlightened by grace, that man possessed a clear knowledge of God, of the world around him, and of himself. Lastly, his will, informed by charity, turned lovingly and always to its Creator.<sup>2</sup>

Such was man in Paradise, and such is Dante's ideal. Accordingly the earthly Paradise is on the summit of the Mount of Purification, to symbolise "the new man," freed from sin, and "created according to God in justice and holiness of truth."<sup>3</sup> As these gifts enable him to attain the final goal of his pilgrimage, the heavenly Paradise, Virgil thus addresses him :

"Both fires, my son,  
The temporal and eternal, thou hast seen,  
And art arrived, where of itself my ken  
No further reaches. I, with skill and art,  
Thus far have drawn thee. Now thy pleasure take  
For guide. Thou hast o'ercome the steeper way,

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appetite wholly, and is in no way forestalled by it, then is the judgment free. But if the appetite in any way forestalls the judgment and guides it, then the judgment is not free ; it is not its own ; it is captive to another power."—*De Monarch.* i. 12.

<sup>1</sup> "I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind."—*Rom.* vii. 23.

<sup>2</sup> "If any man does not confess that the first man, Adam, when he transgressed the command of God in Paradise, immediately lost the holiness and justice in which he had been established, and that the whole Adam was by that offence, both in body and soul, changed to worse, let him be Anathema."—*Conc. Trid.* Sess. v. art. 1. Man's nature was deeply wounded by the Fall ; ignorance took the place of prudence, malice of justice, greed of temperance, weakness of fortitude.

<sup>3</sup> *Ephes.* iv. 24.

O'ercome the straighter. Lo! the sun<sup>1</sup> that darts  
 His beams upon thy forehead: Lo! the herb,  
 The arboret and flowers, which of itself  
 This land pours forth profuse. Till those bright eyes<sup>2</sup>  
 With gladness come, which, weeping, made me haste  
 To succour thee, thou mayst or seat thee down,  
 Or wander where thou wilt.<sup>3</sup> Expect no more  
 Sanction of warning voice or sign from me,  
 Free of thy own arbitrement to chuse,  
 Discreet, judicious. To distrust thy sense  
 Were henceforth error.<sup>4</sup> I invest thee then  
 With crown and mitre, sovereign o'er thyself."

—*Purg.* xxvii. 126.

The purification of the poet's soul is further symbolised by his drinking of the streams of Lethe and of Eunoe. By the former all recollection of his past sins is eternally obliterated, while by the latter he recalls and retains for ever in his memory the good works he has done.<sup>5</sup> St. Thomas thus explains how meritorious works, which have become dead through sin, revive when grace is recovered. "Works done in charity," he says, "are not blotted out by God, but remain accepted by Him. The obstacle to their merit comes from the human agent, and when this obstacle is removed, God on His part grants whatever those works had merited."<sup>6</sup> He again<sup>7</sup> compares the simultaneous remission of sin, and the infusion of grace by the act of God to the rising sun, which at one and the same time chases away the darkness and illuminates the air. Thus also the same ray of grace which expels sin brings to light former merits; and Dante is theologically correct in making

<sup>1</sup> "The symbol of God and of divine grace" (*Conv.* iii. 12).

<sup>2</sup> The eyes of Beatrice (*Hell*, ii. 116).

<sup>3</sup> He may pursue the active or contemplative life.

<sup>4</sup> "If men," says Augustine, "knew and practised justice, there would be no need of written laws (*ragione scritta*)."—*Con.* iv. 9.

<sup>5</sup> *Purg.* xxviii. 135.

<sup>6</sup> *S.* iii. q. 89, a. 5.

<sup>7</sup> *S.* i. 2. q. 113, a. 7.

the two streams, Lethe and Eunoe, spring from the same mysterious source.

In his pilgrimage through Purgatory the poet is more self-reliant than heretofore. He is on his way to man's final end, eternal peace in God. To convert lost souls in Hell was not his mission; nor was he one of them. But the sight of their torments was to stimulate him to penance and amendment, the sinner's only way to salvation. The purpose of his whole poem and of each part is indeed, as he says in his letter to Can Grande, to lead men away from the state of misery in which they live in this life, and to guide them to a state of happiness. In Purgatory, then, we have the type of the purgative way, the first stage towards perfection, which must precede the illuminative and unitive ways,<sup>1</sup> represented in Paradise. By the sacrament of baptism man is regenerated, but his spiritual powers are still in a state of anarchy and disruption; step by step the stains of sin must be obliterated, and all that is earthly and sensual subjugated to the spiritual, before he can regain what he lost by sin—"the liberty of the children of God."<sup>2</sup>

Dante begins his ascent of the Mount of Purification still under the guidance of Virgil; for natural reason can see both the hideousness of sin and the need of penance:

"What reason here discovers, I have power  
To show thee: that which lies beyond, expect  
From Beatrice."—*Purg.* xviii. 44.

Still Purgatory proper represents a supernatural state, in which reason unaided is no safe leader. It is only when

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Dionys. Areop. *De Myst. Theolog.*

<sup>2</sup> "But that Jerusalem, which is above, is free."—*Gal.* iv. 26. According to Hugo of St. Victor, Jerusalem signifies allegorically the Church; tropologically, the spiritual life. As Babylon had seven squares, the seven deadly sins, so has Jerusalem also seven squares opposed to them, the seven virtues. *Institut. Monast. Serm.* 39.

Statius, a Roman poet and a convert to Christianity, joins the wanderers, that they pursue their way with greater confidence :

"The road, the which we chose  
Less doubtful, as that worthy shade complied."

—*Purg.* *xxii.* 123.

When they have reached the earthly Paradise, and the poet's will has become "free, discreet, judicious,"<sup>1</sup> Virgil finally takes leave of him, and Beatrice, the type of Heavenly Wisdom, appears. Prostrate before her, the poet humbly confesses his sinfulness. She explains to him that the Church, as is seen both in her gifts and her work, is ordained to renew man's spiritual life and to reconduct him to the Paradise he had lost. "All sin," says St. Thomas,<sup>2</sup> "is rebellion against the order established, and the repression of that rebellion by the order attacked constitutes the punishment of sin. The human will being subjected to three orders, is liable to a triple punishment. These orders are, first, his own reason; second, his outward ruler, spiritual or temporal; third, the universal order of divine government. . . . Each of these orders being disturbed by the sin, . . . the sinner incurs a triple penalty—from himself in remorse of conscience; secondly, from his fellow-men; thirdly, from God."<sup>3</sup> This retributive justice is the principle common to the punishments both of Hell and of Purgatory :

"And to dignity thus lost  
Is no return; unless, where guilt makes void,  
He for ill-pleasure pay with equal pain."—*Par.* *vii.* 78.

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* *xxvii.* 140, *xxx.* 49.

<sup>2</sup> *S. i.* 2. q. 89, a. 1

<sup>3</sup> [Bossuet shows how our Lord underwent this triple pain,—in the agony of the garden, the remorse for sin; in the various trials and sufferings which followed, the punishment from creatures; and in the dereliction on the Cross, the final chastisement by God. *Premier Sermon pour le Vendredi-Saint.* "Posuit Dominus in eo iniquitatem omnium nostrum."—*Isa.* *liii.* 6.]



Yet these punishments differ essentially in character. Those of Hell are of a purely vindictive nature, and serve to expiate the sinner's violations of the moral law, the reflection of God's eternal wisdom and holiness.<sup>1</sup> The sufferings of Purgatory, on the contrary, are primarily expiatory, the temporal punishment which has to be borne in this world or the next;<sup>2</sup> but, secondarily, they serve to purify the soul from its remaining infirmities. Evil habits are broken through; the whole inner man, with his dispositions and motives, is laid bare, in order that, by continual self-discipline and by the exercise of those virtues most opposed to his natural inclinations, he may regain his moral freedom.<sup>3</sup> Far otherwise is it in Hell. There the lost soul must suffer for that sinful act, the ripe fruit of the disposition from which it sprang. Throughout eternity that sinful act remains, since it has never been effaced by contrition and grace. And throughout eternity remains also the disposition, ever breaking out afresh into sinful act, to be the eternal torment of the lost soul. Of his own free-will the sinner placed himself under the yoke of the sinful habit, which will for ever hold him fast bound in guilt.<sup>4</sup> Hence, in the lowest circles of Purgatory, which contain the greater number of penitent souls, are souls stained by pride and envy. The sin may have been in thought only, not in act, or, if in act, its guilt may have

<sup>1</sup> "It is not fit that God should allow anything disordered in His kingdom; . . . and if the Divine Wisdom did not inflict these pains, the universe itself, the order of which God should preserve, would suffer a certain deformity from its violated beauty, and Divine Providence would seem to fail."—*Anselm. Cant. Our Deus Homo*, l. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Conc. Trid., Sess. xiv. de Sac. Pœnit.

<sup>3</sup> "We must not forget that Purgatory symbolises the whole process of man's regeneration." *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> "This man, of his own free-will, sold himself to the dominion of iniquity. . . . I am bent crooked, he said, under its burden. . . . Through willing to do evil, he has lost the power to do good. . . . Thou art still under the yoke of iniquity."—*August. Serm. xxx. 2.*

long since been washed away in the waters of baptism or penance;<sup>1</sup> but pride and envy are in themselves sinful, and beget a debt of penance. The stains, too, which they form must be purged away and the soul made clean, by acts of humiliation and brotherly love.

Thus Purgatory is not merely a place of suffering; it is also a school of higher moral teaching, a sanctuary of humble, contrite prayer.<sup>2</sup> In each circle pictures, graven upon the rock or traced upon the ground, instruct the penitent. Visions or voices recall for his instruction terrible examples,<sup>3</sup> gathered from history, sacred or profane,<sup>4</sup> of the sins chastised, or suggest models of the opposite virtues; and as the purified spirit emerges from each successive

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* xi. 58, xiii. 123.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* viii. 13, xxv. 118.

<sup>3</sup> "We must here recall what has been said of that appetite which is born in us from our first beginning. This appetite pursues certain objects and flies from others, and in proportion as its pursuit and flight are rightly directed does man arrive at perfection. In truth, this appetite must be ridden by reason. For as an unbroken horse, however excellent its nature, for want of a good rider never goes well, so this appetite, the irascible and concupiscent, however good in itself, should obey reason, which guides it with rein and spur. Reason, like a good horseman, checks the appetite by the rein of temperance when it pursues a wrong object, and uses the spur of fortitude to make it face what it seeks to fly." Cf. *Conv.* iv. 26. 'The sensitive appetite being an inclination which follows the sense of apprehension, there must be two appetitive faculties in every sensitive nature—one which merely impels the animal to seek what is agreeable to the senses, and to avoid things hurtful, and this is called the concupiscent (*concupiscibilis*) appetite; the other, by which the animal resists all that opposes it or would do it harm, and this is called the irascible, because its tendency is to overcome obstacles."—S. i. q. 81, a. 2. The cardinal virtue of temperance governs the concupiscent faculty; that of fortitude the irascible. Of these St. Thomas says: "Reason must regulate the passions in proportion to the repugnance they exhibit to its sway, and this is shown in two ways. First, when a passion impels to any act contrary to reason, and then reason must repress it, and is therefore called 'temperance'; secondly, when a passion, as the fear of danger or toil, shrinks from what reason dictates, and then man needs to be confirmed in his reasonable resolve, lest he depart from it, and this is therefore called 'fortitude.'"—S. i. 2. q. 61, a. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* x. 31, xiii. 28, xv. 85, xviii. 117, xx. 42, xxii. 26, 64.

circle, it is greeted by that special beatitude which till now, it was unworthy to possess.<sup>1</sup>

At the foot of the Mount of Purification Dante is accosted by a venerable old man, "worthy of reverence" in his look.<sup>2</sup> This is Cato of Utica, who sacrificed his life for his country's freedom. The four stars of the Southern Cross, emblematic of the four cardinal virtues, a constellation invisible in our Northern climes, shed a bright radiance on his white hair. The "noblest of the Romans," as Virgil,<sup>3</sup> and some even of the Fathers, considered him,<sup>4</sup> Dante ascribes his suicide to divine inspiration. Wilful suicides are, as we have seen, placed with murderers in the seventh circle of Hell; but of Cato Dante says in the *Convito*, "Oh, most holy breast of Cato! who dare speak of thee? Thy best praise is silence. For his life and that of other divine citizens show actions so wonderful as to be only possible by the light of the divine goodness, superadded to the goodness of nature."<sup>5</sup> Therefore, as the righteous, austere champion of liberty, Cato represents souls saved by the baptism of desire; and as the witness by his blood to the priceless value of moral freedom, which is to be gained in Purgatory by penance and virtuous acts, he fitly keeps guard at its entrance.<sup>6</sup>

The poet's cheeks, which are suffused with tears and disfigured by the smoke of Hell, Virgil now bathes with

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* xii. 103, xv. 38, xvii. 67, xix. 50, xxii. 5, xxiv. 148, xxvii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* i. 31.

<sup>3</sup> "Apart from these the happy souls he draws,  
And Cato's holy ghost dispensing laws."—*Æneid*, viii. 889.

<sup>4</sup> The very prince of Roman wisdom, "ipse Romanæ sapientiæ princeps" (Lactant. *Instit. Divin.* iv. 18), though his suicide is condemned as a heinous crime.

<sup>5</sup> *Conv.* iv. 5.

<sup>6</sup> "To inflame the world with a love of freedom, Cato preferred dying free to living a slave."—*De Mon.* ii. 5. A collection of maxims, which agreed in many ways with those of the Bible, was in the Middle Ages ascribed to Cato, and was inserted by Latini in his *Trésor*.

dew, and girding him with the rush<sup>1</sup> of humility, makes him ready to enter Purgatory.

It is the first break of day. Looking across the sea, the poet perceives a distant light, which approaches swiftly. "Again I looked, and saw it grown in size and brightness." Silent they stand, until the "brightness that we first discerned opened the form of wings." Then, when Virgil perceives that it is a bark steered by an angel, he exclaims :

" Down, down ; bend low  
Thy knees ; behold God's angel ; fold thy hands.  
. . . . Nor oar he needs, nor other sail  
Except his wings, between such distant shores.  
. . . .  
He drove ashore in a small bark, so swift  
And high, that in its course no wave was seen.  
. . . .  
Within a hundred spirits and more there sat.  
'In exitu Israel de Egypto'  
All with one voice together sang."—*Purg.* ii. 28.

These are the souls who, having died in a state of grace, are being escorted by the angel from the estuary of the Tiber to the Mount of Purgatory. Among them Dante recognises his friend Casella, who sings one of Dante's *canzoni* to a melody probably of his own composing :

" In such soft accents, that within  
The sweetness thrills me yet. My gentle guide,  
And all who came with him, so well were pleased,  
That seem'd nought else might in their thoughts have  
room."—*Purg.* ii. 109.

The poets reach Ante-Purgatory, where are detained those who have neglected proffered grace. Of these, there

<sup>1</sup> The rush is the symbol of humility, because it makes no show, having neither trunk nor leaves. It is further a type of grace, for it grows again when it is plucked, just as grace succeeds to grace, and is not lessened by being bestowed.

are four classes. Those who died excommunicate but contrite are detained, for their neglect to be absolved, thirty times as long as the term of their excommunication.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, those who, presuming on God's mercy, delayed their conversion till death, do penance for the period corresponding to that of their delay.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, the negligent of the preceding class, who died by violence, remain here for a term equal to that of their natural life.<sup>3</sup> Fourthly, those who, through the preoccupation of political cares, deferred their repentance, are detained for twice that period.<sup>4</sup> This division of Ante-Purgatory and Purgatory proper had a real foundation in the canonical penances of the Primitive Church.

The penitents were divided into four classes—the mourners, the hearers, the prostrate, and the stationary (*consistentes*). The first class of penitents, “the mourners,” were forbidden to enter the church, but stood without the porch, exposed to all the inclemency of the weather, and imploring with tears the prayers of the worshippers as they passed. “The hearers” assisted at the prayers from the vestibule, but not at the mass. “The prostrate” assisted at the Mass of Catechumens, and left after the sermon, before the Preface. “The stationary” remained for the sacrifice, but did not go up to make their offering with the rest of the faithful, and were not allowed to receive Holy Communion.<sup>5</sup>

As the poet advances, he is met by Manfred, the Ghibelline leader, son of Frederick II. Being excommunicated for contumacy, he neglected to do penance, and died with his censure unabsolved.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* iii. 131.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* iv. 126.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* v., vi.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* vii. 91.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Dollinger's *Church History*, vol. ii. p. 331, Cox, trans.; Eusebius, *H. E.* v. 28; Hieronym. *Epitaph. Fabiol.*; Cf. Frank, *Die Buss-disciplin der Kirche*, 1867, p. 560.

<sup>6</sup> Manfred was excommunicated by Urban V. for wresting the kingdom of Sicily and Naples from his nephew Conradin, whom he attempted to poison. He ravaged Italy with an army of Saracens

Ascending a narrow cleft in the rocks, Dante encounters the negligent of the second class—Belacqua the Florentine, Buonconte da Montefeltro, Pia, the wife of Nello de Pannochieschi, and others. Slowly defiling across the heights, they chant the Miserere in “responsive strains.” Sordello of Mantua now greets his townsman, Virgil, with “glad cheer,” and conducts the wanderers to a lovely vale :

“Refulgent gold, and silver thrice refined,  
And scarlet grain and ceruse, Indian wood  
Of lucid dye serene, fresh emeralds  
But newly broken, by the herbs and flowers  
Placed in that fair recess, in colour all  
Had been surpass’d, as great surpasses less.  
Nor Nature only there lavish’d her hues,  
But of the sweetness of a thousand smells  
A rare and undistinguish’d fragrance made.”

—*Purg.* vii. 73.

Here they sit down to await the dawn of day ; for being in the darkness—that is, without the light of grace—they cannot mount higher. Among the potentates here detained they recognise the Emperor Rudolph of Hapsburg,

“Who might have heal’d  
The wounds whereof fair Italy hath died”

—*Purg.* vii. 94 ;

and Charles of Anjou, Manfred’s<sup>1</sup> Guelf opponent.<sup>2</sup>

Night draws on. Dante, anxious but trustful, is consoled by the sweet harmonies of penitential prayer in the strains of the Compline hymn. One of the spirits had risen from its place, and with its hand an “audience implored :”

and infidels, and was finally slain at Benevento, 1266. Dante makes him die contrite.

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* vii. 114.

<sup>2</sup> His dying prayer breathes the spirit of true repentance : “Sire Dieu, comme je crois vraiment que Vous êtes mon Sauveur, ainsi je Vous prie, que vous ayez merci de mon âme.”—*Villani*, vii. 95.

"Both palms it join'd and raised,  
 Fixing its steadfast gaze toward the east,  
 As telling God, 'I care for nought beside.'  
 'Te *Lucis Ante*,' so devoutly then  
 Came from its lips, and in so soft a strain,  
 That all my sense in ravishment was lost.  
 And the rest after, softly and devout,  
 Follow'd through all the hymn."—*Purg.* viii. 10.

As it dies away,

"That gentle band silently next  
 Look up, as if in expectation held,  
 Pale, and in lowly guise."—*Purg.* viii. 22.

The Tempter, under the form of a serpent, draws near ;  
 but two angels, with "flame-illuminated swords," broken and  
 blunted at their points,<sup>1</sup> hasten to meet him, and the serpent  
 slinks away.

Dante now falls into a deep sleep, and awakes to find  
 himself alone with his guide :

"Sole at my side  
 My comfort stood : and the bright sun was now  
 More than two hours aloft ; and to the sea  
 My looks were turn'd. 'Fear not,' my master cried,  
 'Assured we are at happy point. Thy strength  
 Shrink not, but rise dilated. Thou art come  
 To Purgatory now. Lo ! there the cliff  
 That circling bounds it. Lo ! the entrance there,  
 Where it doth seem departed. Ere the dawn  
 Usher'd the daylight, when thy wearied soul  
 Slept in thee, o'er the flowery vale beneath  
 A lady came, and thus bespake me : 'I  
 Am Lucia. Suffer me to take this man,  
 Who slumbers. Easier so his way shall speed.'"

—*Purg.* ix. 39.

In the cleft of a rock, the poet sees a door approached by

<sup>1</sup> These pointless swords signify that God's justice is always tempered  
 by mercy, or that they are to serve for defence, not attack.

three steps of diverse colours; the lowest "marble white," smooth and polished; the next, "more dark than sablest grain," "cracked lengthwise and across;" the third, of massive porphyry, "red as the life-blood spouting from a vein." These steps denote the three acts of examen of conscience, contrition, and firm resolve, already referred to. On the threshold, "a rock of diamond," sits an angel of God, who marks with his sword seven P's upon the poet's brow, and then unlocks the door with the keys intrusted to him:

"From Peter these  
I hold, of him instructed that I err  
Rather in opening, than in keeping fast;  
So but the suppliant at my feet implore."

—*Purg.* ix. 119.

Dante now enters the second division of Purgatory, that is, Purgatory proper, whose seven circles he successively ascends, in order to expiate the stains of the seven deadly sins.

Through a narrow rift in the rock, by a steep winding path, the poet wearily toils upwards to the first circle, which is in width thrice a man's stature. Behind it rises a high cliff of marble, upon which are wrought, with "quaintest sculpture," types in bas-relief of the virtue of humility; the Annunciation of Mary, Oza and David dancing before the ark, the Emperor Trajan granting the widow's suit.<sup>1</sup> Here the proud are purified; they stoop, like Caryatides, under the weight of the huge blocks of stone:

"With the feign'd posture, stirring ruth unfeign'd  
In the beholder's fancy; so I saw  
These fashion'd, when I noted well their guise.  
Each, as his back was laden, came indeed  
Or more or less contracted; and it seem'd

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Dio. Cass. xix. 5; Paul Diacon. *Vit. S. Gregor.* iv. 44; Thom. *Supp.* lxxxi. 5.



As he, who show'd most patience in his look,  
Wailing exclaimed: 'I can endure no more.'

—*Purg.* x. 122.

The proud repeat the Pater Noster. This divine expression of our impotence and need contains in its seven petitions the remedy for the seven deadly sins,<sup>1</sup> and is the fitting utterance of the once proud soul in the first degree of its purification. With bowed heads, as they pass on, they gaze upon numerous examples of pride chiselled on the rocky walls and pavement, taken from scriptural and historical subjects, such as the fall of Lucifer, Niobe turned to stone, the death of Saul, the fate of Roboam, Sennacherib, Ilion and others.

Overwhelmed by his sense of the nothingness of earthly greatness, the poet exclaims:

"O powers of man! how vain your glory, nipt  
E'en in its height of verdure, if an age  
Less bright succeed not. . . .  
. . . . The noise  
Of worldly fame is but a blast of wind,  
That blows from diverse points, and shifts its name,  
Shifting the point it blows from."—*Purg.* xi. 91, 98.

The different kinds of pride are here portrayed. First, pride of birth, in Umberto, son of Guglielmo Aldobrandesco:<sup>2</sup>

"My old blood and forefathers' gallant deeds  
Made me so haughty, that I clean forgot  
The common mother; and to such excess  
Wax'd in my scorn of all men, that I fell."

—*Purg.* xi. 61

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hugo & S. Vict. *Elucidat* in *Abd.* 19.

<sup>2</sup> [The Aldobrandeschi were Counts of Santaflora in the territory of Sienna, and were in perpetual feud with the Siennese. Umberto, for his overweening arrogance, was murdered by them in his castle at Campagnatico in 1279.—C.]

Next, Oderigi of Agobbio, the miniature painter, represents pride of art and talent :

"In truth, I had not been thus courteous to him,<sup>1</sup>  
The whilst I lived, through eagerness of zeal  
For that pre-eminence my heart was bent on.  
Here, of such pride the forfeiture is paid.  
Nor were I even here, if, able still  
To sin, I had not turn'd me unto God."

—*Purg.* xi. 85.

Provenzano Salvani of Sienna, chief of the Tuscan Ghibellines, is the type of an ambitious popular leader. According to Villani,<sup>2</sup> he was "*multo presuntuoso di sua volontà*," but humbled himself by begging in the marketplace of Sienna for the ransom of a friend, and so atoned for his ambition :

"This, he replied,  
Is Provenzano. He is here, because  
He reach'd, with grasp presumptuous, at the sway  
Of all Sienna."—*Purg.* xi. 121.

The poet is now cleansed from the sin of pride, and an angel with his wings brushes away the first P from his forehead. Thus lightened, he scarcely feels the toil as he

<sup>1</sup> [According to Vasari, Oderigi and his rival, Franco Bolognese, here introduced, were employed at the same time by Boniface VIII.]

<sup>2</sup> [Villani (vii. 31) relates some curious particulars of his fate. "Messer Provenzano Salvani, the lord and conductor of the army, was taken, and his head cut off and carried through all the camp fixed on a lance. And well was accomplished the prophecy and revelation made to him by the devil by way of witchcraft, but he understood it not; for having compelled him to answer how he should succeed in the said engagement, he told him lyingly: 'Thou shalt go, fight, conquer, not die in the battle, and thy head shall be the highest in the camp.' And he thought to have the victory, and from these words thought to remain master of all, and noted not the fallacy when he said 'conquer, not die.' And therefore it is great folly to trust such counsel as that of the devil." He was slain after an engagement with a mixed force of Florentines and French at Val d'Essa, in June 1269.—C.]

mounts with Virgil the stairs to the second circle, amid the praises of humility here chanted by the penitents :<sup>1</sup>

“As, entering, there we turn’d, voices in strain  
Ineffable sang: ‘Blessed are the poor  
In spirit!’ Ah! how far unlike to these  
The straits of hell: here songs to usher us,  
There shrieks of woe.”—*Purg.* xii. 103.

In the second and narrower circle the envious do penance. The rocks are of a grey and “sullen hue;” the path is smooth and level. Instead of the bas-reliefs which in the first circle bespoke the virtue of humility, voices of spirits here extol the love of our neighbour, whether friend or foe. Clad in garments dark as the surrounding rocks, they recite in unison the Litany of the Saints :

“Of sackcloth vile  
Their covering seem’d; and, on his shoulder, one  
Did stay another, leaning; and all lean’d  
Against the cliff. E’en thus the blind and poor,  
Near the confessionals, to crave an alms,  
Stand, each his head upon his fellow’s sunk;  
So most to stir compassion, not by sound  
Of words alone, but that which moves not less,  
The sight of misery. And as never beam  
Of noonday visiteth the eyeless man,  
E’en so was Heaven a niggard unto these  
Of his fair light: for, through the orbs of all,  
A thread of wire, impiercing, knits them up,  
As for the taming of a haggard hawk.”

—*Purg.* xiii. 52.

Here the poet finds Sapia, a lady of Sienna, who having been exiled by her countrymen, selfishly rejoiced at their defeat. She thus describes her fate :

<sup>1</sup> “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”  
—*Matt.* v. 3. Cf. *Bonavent. Breviloq.* v. 6.

“ Here  
 I cleanse away with these the evil life,  
 Soliciting with tears that He, Who is,  
 Vouchsafe him to us. Though Sapia named,  
 In sapience I excell'd not, gladder far  
 Of other's hurt, than of the good befel me.”

—*Purg.* xiii. 98.

Next Guido del Duca<sup>1</sup> confesses that :

“ Envy so parch'd my blood, that had I seen  
 A fellowman made joyous, thou had'st mark'd  
 A livid paleness overspread my cheek.”—*Purg.* xiv. 85.

Dante is taught the contrast between “the highest good, unlimited, ineffable,” and this selfish greed of earthly goods ; for

“ The more aspirants to that bliss  
 Are multiplied, more good is there to love,<sup>2</sup>  
 And more is loved.”—*Purg.* xv. 70.

The second P is now effaced from Dante's forehead, and the strain “*Beati misericordes*”<sup>3</sup> accompanies his upward steps.

In the third circle the wrathful are purified. They are surrounded by a fog “so palpable and gross,” that the poet is led, like a blind man, by Virgil. On the way, he beholds in ecstatic vision examples of meekness—Mary with Joseph finding her Divine Son in the Temple, Pisistratus of Athens,<sup>4</sup> the Protomartyr Stephen praying for his murderers :

<sup>1</sup> [Of this Guido no details are known.—C.]

<sup>2</sup> Thus too St. Augustine : “So shall God be all in all, that since God is love, by love it shall come to pass that what they severally have shall be common to all. Each one is in himself the possessor when he loves in the other, what himself possesseth not. So shall there not be any invidiousness of unequal glory, since the unity of charity shall reign ‘all in all.’”—*Tract.* lxvii. 2, in Joan.

<sup>3</sup> “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”—*Matt.*

v. 7.

<sup>4</sup> The wife of Pisistratus urged him to slay a youth, who had embraced their daughter in public. His reply was, “If we slay those who love

“Straight I heard  
Voices, and each one seem'd to pray for peace,  
And for compassion, to the Lamb of God  
That taketh sins away. Their prelude still  
Was ‘Agnus Dei;’ and through all the choir,  
One voice, one measure ran, that perfect seem'd  
The concord of their song.”—*Purg.* xvi. 14.

Among them Dante recognises Marco Lombardo,<sup>1</sup> who directs him through the gloom and begs for his prayers :

“‘Thy course tends right  
Unto the summit:’ and, replying thus,  
He added, ‘I beseech thee pray for me,  
When thou shalt come aloft.’”—*Purg.* xvi. 49.

Marco explains to the poet why “the world is even so forlorn of good” and “swarms with every evil.” Man is a free agent, nor can the influence of the stars deprive him of his free-will and responsibility :

“If this were so,  
Free choice in you were none; nor justice would  
There should be joy for virtue, woe for ill.  
.  
.  
.  
Light have ye still to follow evil or good,  
And of the will free power, which, if it stand  
Firm and unwearied in Heaven’s first assay,  
Conquers at last, so it be cherish’d well,  
Triumphant over all.”—*Purg.* xvi. 70.

Marco also ascribes the deplorable condition of Italy, at

us, what must we do with those who hate us !” Valer. Maxim. *Facta ac Dicta Memorab.* vi. 1.

<sup>1</sup> [This Marco was a Venetian gentleman, and Villani terms him “a wise and worthy courtier.” It is related of him, that being imprisoned and not able to pay his ransom, he applied to his friend Riccardo da Camino, lord of Treviso, for relief. Riccardo set on foot a contribution among several nobles of Lombardy, of which, when Marco was informed, he indignantly said, that he would rather die than remain under obligations to so many benefactors. It is added that Riccardo then paid the whole out of his own purse.—C. *in loc.*]

that time, to the confusion of the temporal and spiritual powers :

"Thus the cause  
Is not corrupted nature in yourselves,  
But ill-conducting, that hath turn'd the world  
To evil."—*Purg.* xvi. 106.

As Dante proceeds, his imagination recalls terrible examples of anger, such as Aman, the cruel foe of Mordecai,<sup>1</sup> and Amata, the wife of Latinus, who, maddened by the Fury Alecto, committed suicide.<sup>2</sup> At length, amid the softly whispered cadences of the "Beati pacifici,"<sup>3</sup> the third P is brushed away from the poet's brow, and the travellers ascend to the fourth circle, where the slothful are doing penance :

"The love of good, whate'er  
Wanted of just proportion, here fulfils.  
Here plies afresh the oar, that loiter'd ill."

—*Purg.* xvii. 81.

Defect of love Virgil thus declares to be the cause of sloth. He then proceeds to explain that love is the principle of all action, and the difference between love necessary and free. His argument is taken from St. Thomas, who teaches as follows :—"The natural inclination in anything is called the natural appetite, and it follows from its natural form."<sup>4</sup> "As natural knowledge is always true, so natural

<sup>1</sup> Esther v. 14.

<sup>2</sup> "Mad with her anguish, impotent to bear  
The mighty grief, she loathes the vital air ;  
She calls herself the cause of all this ill,  
And owns the dire effects of her ungoverned will ;  
She raves against the gods, she beats her breast,  
She tears with both her hands her purple vest ;  
Then round a beam a running noose she tied,  
And, fastened by the neck, obscenely died."

—*Æn.* vii. 875.

<sup>3</sup> "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."—*Matt.* v. 9.

<sup>4</sup> S. l. q. 80 a. 1.

love is always right, since it is nothing else than a natural inclination implanted by the Author of nature." <sup>1</sup> "The first movement of the will and of every appetitive faculty is love." <sup>2</sup> "Gravity itself, the principle by which everything is set in motion towards its natural place, can, because of this natural attraction (*propter connaturalitatem*), be called in a sense natural love." <sup>3</sup> "Love in rational creatures, being free, can err; for reason can represent to the will a merely apparent as a real good; but evil, as such, can never be the object of the will. The root of freedom is in the will as its subject, but in reason as its cause. For the power of the will to turn to diverse objects comes from the capacity of reason to form diverse conceptions of good." <sup>4</sup> "God being the Universal Mover, moves the will of man towards its object, which is the good; and without this general impulse man could not will anything. But man by reason determines to will this or that object, which is either a real good or bears its semblance." <sup>5</sup> Hence the axiom of the schools, that "*omne agens agit propter bonum*," "good is the end of every action." These principles Virgil thus enunciates:

"Creator, nor created being, e'er,  
My son, (he thus began), was without love,  
Or natural, or the free spirit's growth.  
Thou hast not that to learn. The natural still  
Is without error: but the other swerves,  
If on ill object bent, or through excess  
Of vigour, or defect. While e'er it seeks  
The primal blessings, or with measure due  
The inferior, no delight that flows from it,  
Partakes of ill. But let it warp to evil,  
Or with more ardour than behoves, or less,  
Pursue the good; the thing created then  
Works 'gainst its Maker. Hence thou must infer,

<sup>1</sup> Q. 60, a. 1 ad 3.

<sup>2</sup> Q. 20, a. 1.

<sup>3</sup> S. i. 2. q. 26, a. 2.

<sup>4</sup> S. i. 2. q. 17, a. 1. ad 2.

<sup>5</sup> S. i. 2. q. 9, a. 6.

That love is germin of each virtue in ye,  
 And of each act no less, that merits pain.  
 Now since it may not be, but love intend  
 The welfare mainly of the thing it loves,  
 All from self-hatred are secure; and since  
 No being can be thought to exist apart,  
 And independent of the first, a bar  
 Of equal force<sup>1</sup> restrains from hating that.  
 Grant the distinction just; and it remains  
 The evil must be another's, which is loved.  
 Three ways<sup>2</sup> such love is gender'd in your clay.  
 There is who hopes (his neighbours' worth deprest)  
 Pre-eminence himself; and covets hence,  
 For his own greatness, that another fall.  
 There is<sup>3</sup> who so much fears the loss of power,  
 Fame, favour, glory, (should his fellow mount  
 Above him), and so sickens at the thought,  
 He loves their opposite: and there is he,  
 Whom wrong or insult seems to gall and shame,<sup>4</sup>  
 That he doth thirst for vengeance; and such needs  
 Must dote on others' evil. Here beneath,  
 This threefold love is mourn'd. Of the other sort  
 Be now instructed; that which follows good,  
 But with disorder'd and irregular course.  
 All indistinctly apprehend a bliss,  
 On which the soul may rest; the hearts of all

<sup>1</sup> Thus St. Thomas: "By His essence God is goodness itself, which no one can hate, for it is of the nature of good to be loved. Therefore any one who sees God in His essence cannot possibly hate Him. . . . But there are certain effects of God which are repugnant to a disordered will, as the infliction of punishment, and considered with regard to these effects, God can be to some an object of hate."—ii. 2. 34, a. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The sin of pride. "Pride is defined as love of one's own excellence, because this love produces that disordered desire of excelling others, which properly belongs to pride." S. ii. 2. q. 162, a. 3.

<sup>3</sup> The sin of envy. "Envy is sadness felt on account of others' good. The object of the sadness is ill done to oneself. But as the good of others can be regarded as an evil to oneself, it becomes in this way the matter for sadness."—S. ii. 2. 36, a. 1.

<sup>4</sup> "Anger is a mortal sin when unjust vengeance is desired, because it is thus opposed both to charity and justice."—S. ii. 2. 158, a. 3.



Yearn after it; and to that wished bourn  
 All therefore strive to tend. If ye behold,  
 Or seek it, with a love remiss and lax;<sup>1</sup>  
 This cornice, after just repenting, lays  
 Its penal torment on ye. Other good  
 There is, where man finds not his happiness:  
 It is not true fruition; not that blest  
 Essence,<sup>2</sup> of every good the branch and root.  
 The love too lavishly bestow'd on this,  
 Along three<sup>3</sup> circles over us, is mourn'd.  
 Account of that division tripartite  
 Expect not, fitter for thine own research."

—*I'urg.* xvii. 87.

This love of the good is born in us, like the perception  
 of self-evident truth, and, as such, is therefore neither  
 meritorious nor reprehensible:

"From whence his intellect  
 Deduced its primal notices of things,  
 Man therefore knows not, or his appetites

<sup>1</sup> The sin of sloth. "The impenitent slothful are in the forecourt of Hell, along with those who lived without praise or blame."

<sup>2</sup> "Cor nostrum inquietum est, donec requiescat in te." "Our heart is restless till it rest in Thee."—*Aug. Conf.* ii. 1. "Man's beatitude cannot possibly be in any created good, for beatitude is that perfect good, which completely satisfies the appetite; nor, if it left aught to be wished for, would it be the last end. But the object of the will, which is the appetitive faculty in man, is the universal good, as the universal truth is the object of his intellect. Hence evidently nothing can appease the human will save the universal good, which is not found in anything created, for every creature possesses a participated goodness, but in God alone, Who alone, therefore, can satisfy the will of man."—*S. i. 2. q. 2, a. 8.* Cf. Boethius, *De Consol. Phil.* iii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> The three carnal sins of avarice, gluttony, and unchastity, which Dante, being still under the dominion of the senses, can discover for himself; Virgil (Reason) having pointed out the preceding spiritual sins. In this division of the seven deadly sins Dante differs from St. Thomas (*i. 2. q. 84, a. 7*), but agrees with St. Gregory the Great (*Moral.* xxxi. 55) and others. While St. Thomas represents pride as a disordinate striving after pre-eminence, Dante, with St. Gregory, makes it the desire to humiliate our neighbour, in which the proud man finds a gain to himself.

Their first affections ; such in you, as zeal  
In bees to gather honey ; at the first,  
Volition, meriting nor blame nor praise."

—*Purg.* xviii. 52.

In the possession of the good, love finds its full rest ;<sup>1</sup>  
but in order that it may seek the true good, and not evil,  
its counterfeit,

"Ye have that virtue in you, whose just voice  
Uttereth counsel, and whose word should keep  
The threshold of assent."—*Purg.* xviii. 60.

The office of conscience is therefore to estimate the object of our preference in its relation to our final end, and to take or reject it, as it furthers or hinders the attainment of that end.<sup>2</sup> Upon this depends the freedom, or moral character, of our actions :

"Here is the source  
Whence cause of merit in you is derived ;

<sup>1</sup> "According to Aristotle, the appetite moves in a circle (i.e., ends where it begins). The desirable object (*ipsum appetibile*) produces in the appetite a certain fitness for union with itself, which is a certain complacency in the appetite, and from this follows the movement to the object desired. For the desirable object moves the appetite, determining the direction it is to take, and the appetite then tends towards the actual attainment of the desired object. The first modification (*immutatio*) of the appetite by the desirable object is called love, which is nothing else than the complacency of the appetite in that object. From this complacency follows the movement towards the desirable object, which is desire ; and lastly rest (in its possession), which is joy."

—*S.* i. 2. q. 26, a. 2.

<sup>2</sup> "Twofold is the knowledge of the end, the perfect and the imperfect. The knowledge of the end is perfect, when we apprehend a thing not only as our end, but also its nature as our final object, and the relation which exists between the act and its end. Such knowledge belongs solely to a rational creature. Imperfect knowledge of the end consists in the mere apprehension of the object, preceeding from its nature, or the relation of the act to the end ; and this knowledge exists in the brutes, by means of their senses and natural instinct (*æstimatio*.) An act, then, is perfectly voluntary when the end is perfectly known ; that is, when, on apprehending that end, a man can, after deliberating on the end and the necessary means, be moved thereto or not."—*S.* i. 2. q. 6, a. 2.

E'en as the affections, good or ill, she takes,  
 Or severs, winnow'd as the chaff. Those men,  
 Who, reasoning, went to depth profoundest, mark'd  
 That innate freedom; and were thence induced  
 To leave their moral teaching to the world.  
 Grant then, that from necessity arise  
 All love that glows within you; to dismiss  
 Or harbour it, the power is in yourselves."

—*Purg.* xviii. 62.

The wanderers are here overtaken by a throng of the slothful, who, rushing on, "by eagerness impelled of holy love," recall loudly to each other eminent models of zeal—Mary hastening to the hill country to visit Elizabeth, Caesar hurrying to subdue Iberia. The rearmost spirits, on the other hand, shout out memorable historical examples of the punishment of sloth.

Dante has not yet traversed the fourth circle when he falls asleep, and in a dream sees a "woman's shape" approaching,

"With lips that stammer'd, eyes aslant,  
 Distorted feet, hands maim'd, and colour pale."

—*Purg.* xix. 8.

This old hag is the type of avarice, gluttony and unchastity; but as Dante continues to gaze upon her, her hideousness disappears, and when she begins to sing he listens spell-bound. A true picture of the manner in which these sins seduce us. Revolting in themselves, they are, if allowed to linger, transformed by a sensual imagination into fictitious beauty. But instantly, to shame her, at his side appears

"A dame of semblance holy. With stern voice  
 She utter'd, 'Say, O Virgil! who is this?'  
 Which hearing, he approach'd with eyes still bent  
 Toward that goodly presence: the other seized her."

—*Purg.* xix. 26.

Rending the syren's robes asunder, she unmasks the loathsome figure concealed beneath, and wakes the poet from his delusive trance.<sup>1</sup> This second lady personifies the rational, right-directed will, and appears to Virgil, natural reason, because that faculty can discern the utter nothingness of all sensual goods.

Now welcomed by soft angelic chants of the "Beati qui lugent, quoniam ipsi consolabuntur,"<sup>2</sup> the travellers mount to the fifth circle, whilst another P is erased from the poet's brow. Here they find spirits lying on the ground and weeping sore :

"My soul hath cleaved to the dust,"<sup>3</sup> I heard,  
With sighs so deep, they well-nigh choked the words."

—*Purg.* xix. 72.

This is the cry of the avaricious ; bound hand and foot, they lie motionless, their faces to the ground. Among them is Pope Adrian V., who died, after the reign of but one month, in 1276. Before him, in veneration of his high office, Dante kneels. Adrian thus explains why he is chastised :

"The cause why Heaven our back toward our cope  
Reverses, shalt thou know : but me know first,  
The successor of Peter.

. . . . .  
A month and little more, by proof I learnt  
With what a weight that robe of sovereignty  
Upon his shoulder rests, who from the mire  
Would guard it ; that each other fardel seems

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Ezech.* xxiii. 29.

<sup>2</sup> "Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted."—*Matt.* v. 5. "To mourn for evil that we may avoid it, inasmuch as it severs us from our friend, is proper to charity alone. But to mourn for any special evil belongs to some special virtue, for every virtue mourns for that which is opposed to it."—*Bonav. Compend.* v. 50.

<sup>3</sup> *Ps.* cxviii. 25 : "Adhæsit pavimento anima mea."

But feathers in the balance. Late, alas!  
 Was my conversion: but when I became  
 Rome's pastor, I discerned at once the dream  
 And cozenage of life; saw that the heart  
 Rested not there, and yet no prouder height  
 Lured on the climber: wherefore, of that life  
 No more enamour'd, in my bosom love  
 Of purer being kindled. For till then  
 I was a soul in misery, alienate  
 From God, and covetous of all earthly things;  
 Now, as thou seest, here punished for my doting.  
 Such cleansing from the taint of avarice,  
 Do spirits converted need, this mount inflicts  
 No direr penalty. E'en as to our eyes  
 Fasten'd below, nor e'er to loftier clime  
 Were lifted; thus hath justice levell'd us  
 Here on the earth. As avarice quench'd our love  
 Of good, without which is no working; thus  
 Here justice holds us prison'd, hand and foot  
 Chain'd down and bound, while heaven's just Lord shall  
 please,  
 So long to tarry, motionless, outstretched.'  
 My knees I stoop'd, and would have spoke; but he,  
 Ere my beginning, by his ear perceived  
 I did him reverence; and 'What cause,' said he,  
 'Hath bowed thee thus?'—'Compunction,' I rejoin'd,  
 'And inward awe of your high dignity.'

—*Purg. xix. 95.*

These shades utter piteous lamentations as they recall, by day, illustrious examples of poverty—Mary in the cave of Bethlehem, Fabricius<sup>1</sup> and Nicolas;<sup>2</sup> and by night, warning instances of avarice—Pygmalion, Midas, Ananias and Sapphira, Heliodorus, Crassus and others. Hugh Capet, who is here, thus condemns his posterity:

<sup>1</sup> Fabricius, when consul, B.C. 282, refused a large bribe offered him by the Samnites to betray his country.

<sup>2</sup> St. Nicolas of Bari gave dowers secretly to three poor girls, who, being exposed to great peril, were thus enabled to marry. He died A.D. 342.

"O avarice!

What canst thou more, who hast subdued our blood  
So wholly to thyself, they feel no care  
Of their own flesh!"—*Purg.* xx. 81.

In ever-memorable lines, the poet, through the mouth of Capet, brands with infamy the impious ill-usage of Pope Boniface VIII. by Philip the Fair, and recognises the inalienable dignity of Christ's Vicar, even in one whom he considered as his personal enemy:

"To hide with direr guilt  
Past ill and future, lo! the flower-de-luce  
Enters Alagna; in His Vicar, Christ  
Himself a captive, and His mockery  
Acted again. Lo! to His holy lip  
The vinegar and gall once more applied;  
And He 'twixt living robbers doom'd to bleed.  
Lo! the new Pilate, of whose cruelty  
Such violence cannot fill the measure up,  
With no decree to sanction, pushes on  
Into the temple his yet eager sails.  
O Sovran Master!<sup>1</sup> when shall I rejoice  
To see the vengeance which Thy wrath, well pleased,  
In secret silence broods?"<sup>2</sup>—*Purg.* xx. 84.

Suddenly the mountain trembles "with various motion rocked," and from all sides resounds the chorus "Gloria in excelsis Deo!" This outburst of rejoicing, explains Statius, the Roman poet, is because a soul's purification is complete.

<sup>1</sup> An allusion to the destruction of the Order of the Templars in 1310.

<sup>2</sup> On August 8, 1303, Nogaret, Vice-Chancellor of Philip the Fair, and Sciarra Colonna, with their followers, surprised the Pope in his palace at Anagni. Forcing their way into his presence-chamber, they found the old man seated upon a throne in his pontifical vestments, his head bent over a golden crucifix, which, together with the keys, he held in his trembling hands. For a moment his venerable age and majestic silence disarmed his foes. Then they broke out into violent invectives, which he bore with calm dignity. Thirty-five days after, the Pope died.

It is Statius himself who, thus cleansed, now joins the wayfarers, and, illumined by the light of faith, imparts to them those truths, which Virgil was incompetent to teach.

Whilst they ascend to the sixth circle, Statius relates that he was detained in Purgatory, because he had not openly professed the Christian faith. In this circle there is a tree "with goodly fruitage hung," and pleasant to the taste, but of which the penitents are forbidden to eat. From amid its foliage voices proceed, which extol the temperance of Mary at the marriage-feast; of the women of ancient Rome, who slaked their thirst with water; the abstinence of Daniel and St. John Baptist. The penitents, a crowd of spirits "silent and devout" file past:

"The eyes of each were dark and hollow; pale  
Their visage, and so lean withal, the bones  
Stood staring through the skin."—*Purg.* xxiii. 20.

Their prayer,<sup>1</sup> "*Labia mea, Domine*" ("Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim Thy praise"), implies that those lips and tongues, once given to gluttony, now serve to proclaim the Divine praises. They meekly suffer hunger and thirst, in joyful hope that thus they may attain eternal bliss.

Among these Dante recognises his wife's brother, Forese Donati:

Lo! a spirit turn'd his eyes  
In their deep-sunken cells, and fasten'd them  
On me, then cried with vehemence aloud:  
'What grace is this vouchsafed me?' By his looks  
I ne'er had recognised him: but the voice  
Brought to my knowledge what his cheer conceal'd.  
Remembrance of his altered lineaments  
Was kindled from that spark, and I agnized  
The visage of Forese. 'Ah! respect

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<sup>1</sup> "*Domine, labia mea aperies, et os meum annuntiabit laudem Tuam.*"  
—*Ps.* l., the *Miserere*.

This wan and leprous-wither'd skin,' thus he  
 Suppliant implored, 'this macerated flesh.  
 Speak to me truly of thyself. And who  
 Are those twain spirits, that escort thee there?  
 Be it not said thou scorn'st to talk with me.

The water and the plant, we pass'd,  
 With power are gifted, by the Eternal Will  
 Infused; the which so pines me. Every spirit,  
 Whose song bewails his gluttony indulged  
 Too grossly, here in hunger and in thirst  
 Is purified. The odour, which the fruit  
 And spray that showers upon the verdure, breathe,  
 Inflames us with desire to feed and drink.  
 Nor once alone, encompassing our route,  
 We come to add fresh fuel to the pain.'  
 'Pain,' said I; 'solace rather.'—*Purg.* xxiii. 36.

Dante reminds him of their common sins, and narrates  
 the history of his own conversion:

"If thou recall to mind  
 What we were once together, even yet  
 Remembrance of those days may grieve thee sore.  
 That I forsook that life, was due to him<sup>1</sup>  
 Who there precedes me.

'Tis he who through profoundest night  
 Of the true dead has brought me, with this flesh  
 As true, that follows. From that gloom the aid  
 Of his sure comfort drew me on to climb,  
 And climbing, wind along this mountain-steep,  
 Which rectifies in you whate'er the world  
 Made crooked and depraved."—*Purg.* xxiii. 109.

Meanwhile the wayfarers, without a rest, climb, one by  
 one, the steep and narrow stair, until, as they pass out  
 of this circle, the angel, with his wing, removes another P  
 from the poet's brow:

<sup>1</sup> Virgil.



"As when, to harbinger the dawn, springs up  
 On freshen'd wing the air of May, and breathes  
 Of fragrance, all impregn'd with herb and flowers;  
 E'en such a wind I felt upon my front  
 Blow gently, and the moving of a wing  
 Perceived, that, moving shed ambrosial smell;  
 And then a voice, 'Blessed are they, whom grace  
 Doth so illume, that appetite in them  
 Exhaleth no inordinate desire,  
 Still hungering as the rule of temperance wills.'"

*Purg.* xxiv. 142.

In the seventh circle, the sensual expiate their sin amid glowing flames, which burst forth from the rocky precipice. Dante and his guide keep close along the outer side:

"Then from the bosom of the burning mass  
 'O God of mercy!'<sup>1</sup> heard I sung, and felt  
 No less desire to turn. And when I saw  
 Spirits along the flame proceeding, I  
 Between their footsteps and mine own was fain  
 To share by turns my view. At the hymn's close  
 They shouted loud, 'I do not know a man';<sup>2</sup>  
 Then in low voice again took up the strain."

—*Purg.* xxv. 117.

<sup>1</sup> "Summas Deus clementiæ" (*sic* in the ancient Breviaries). The first words of the Church's Matin hymn on Saturday. The second and third verses run thus:

"Accept our chants, accept our tears  
 A mingled stream we pour;  
 Such stream the laden bosom cheers  
 To taste Thy sweetness more.

"Purge Thou with fire the o'ercharged mind,  
 Its woes and wounds profound,  
 And with the watcher's girdle bind  
 The limbs which sloth has bound."

—*Newman's trans.*

<sup>2</sup> "Virum non cognosco."—*Luke* i. 34, words of the Blessed Virgin, in reply to the Angelic Salutation.

## THE SENSUAL.

As they thus aloud confess their sin, the inward shame is added to the external fire which torments in order to complete the work of their purification.

"Hence their cry  
..... as they parted, to rebuke  
Themselves, and aid the burning by their shame."  
—*Purg.* xxvi. 71.

Among these sufferers Dante finds certain poets, Guido Guinicelli and Arnaldo Daniello, the latter the author of "Lancelot of the Lake" and the prince of Provençal bards.

On the brink of the flames stands the angel of God. In clear melodious accents he sings "Beati mundo corde,"<sup>1</sup> and beckons the poet to pass through the fire. Dante hesitates, terrified, whilst Virgil vainly exhorts him to take courage. At length :

"When still he saw me fix'd and obstinate,  
Somewhat disturb'd he cried, 'Mark now, my son,  
From Beatrice thou art by this wall  
Divided.'"—*Purg.* xxvii. 34.

The hope of seeing Beatrice expels all Dante's fear.  
His resolve is made. He follows Virgil through the flames, encouraged by the voice, which from the other side bids them welcome, "Venite benedicti Patris mei."<sup>2</sup>

"As at Thisbe's<sup>3</sup> name the eye  
Of Pyramus was opened (when life ebb'd  
Fast from his veins), and took one parting glance,  
While vermeil dyed the mulberry; thus I turn'd  
To my sage guide, relenting, when I heard

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<sup>1</sup> "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."—*Matt.* v. 8.

<sup>2</sup> "Come, ye blessed of My Father."—*Matt.* xxv. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ovid's *Metamorph.* iv. 125.

The name that springs for ever in my breast.  
 He shook his forehead, and 'How long,' he said,  
 'Linger we now?' then smiled, as one would smile  
 Upon a child that eyes the fruit and yields.  
 Into the fire before me then he walk'd;  
 And Statius, who erewhile no little space  
 Had parted us, he pray'd to come behind.  
 I would have cast me into molten glass  
 To cool me, when I entered; so intense  
 Raged the conflagrant mass. The sire beloved,  
 To comfort me, as he proceeded, still  
 Of Beatrice talk'd. 'Her eyes,' saith he,  
 'E'en now I seem to view.'—*Purg.* xxvii. 37.

As night steals on, the poet, worn with fatigue, lies down to sleep upon one of the stairs which lead upward. In his dream he sees Lia and Rachel, types of the active and contemplative life, to be renewed within him now that his purification is perfected. Awakening, he is reassured by Virgil's promise that the "delicious fruit:"

"Which through so many a branch the zealous care  
 Of mortals roams in quest of, shall this day  
 Appease thy hunger."—*Purg.* xxvii. 115.

He mounts up as if on wings, until he stands at last upon the highest step.

Here Virgil takes leave of Dante, for his charge has attained the point, where of itself his ken no farther reaches; that is, he has arrived at the limit of reason's domain, and the kingdom of faith begins. But his guidance is no longer needed:

"Lo! the sun, that darts  
 His beam upon thy forehead. . . .  
 . . . . . Expect no more  
 Sanction of warning voice or sign from me,  
 Free of thy own arbitrement to chuse,  
 Discreet, judicious. To distrust thy sense  
 Were henceforth error."—*Purg.* xxvii. 132.

Dante is finally purged from the wounds of ignorance and weakness, the consequence of original sin. Enlightened by grace, he has only to follow the good, in which his will is confirmed, to reach his last end.

The poet now stands on the summit of the Mount of Purification, in the earthly Paradise. His path lies across a wood, through which flows a crystal stream. Here every recollection of his sins will be obliterated and his moral freedom regained. It is the counterpart of that "gloomy wood" in which he lost his way, at the commencement of his pilgrimage.<sup>1</sup> On the opposite side of the brook he descries :

"A lady all alone, who singing went,  
And culling flower from flower, wherewith her way  
Was all o'er painted."—*Purg.* xxviii. 41.

Radiant with joy and beauty, she approaches, and expresses her readiness to solve his every difficulty. This lady is Matilda.<sup>2</sup> Like Lia in his former vision, she may typify the active life, or perhaps the priesthood, through whose instrumentality we are brought into the Church, the earthly Paradise.<sup>3</sup> To her Virgil and Statius surrender their office of guide, and, falling behind the poet, follow in silence. Matilda proceeds to explain the symbolism of the waters of Lethe and Eunoe, which we have already given.

As the earthly Paradise signifies the state of original justice, to which the Church alone can restore man,<sup>4</sup> it

<sup>1</sup> *Hell*, i. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Early commentators see in Matilda, the Countess of Tuscany; later ones (as Minich, Göschel, Scartazzini), a friend of Beatrice's youth.

<sup>3</sup> "The happiness of this life, which consists in the exercise of the natural powers, and which is figured in the earthly Paradise."—*De Monarch.* iii. 16. (But the assistance of the natural powers by grace is presupposed.)

<sup>4</sup> "Thus Paradise is the Church, as it is called in the Canticles (iv. 13); the four rivers of Paradise are the four Gospels; the fruit trees, the Sacraments, and the fruit their works; the tree of life is the Holy

now appears under the magnificent figure of a triumphal chariot drawn by the mystic Gryphon—CHRIST. Upon the chariot is seated Beatrice, the type of Divine Wisdom and Beatitude. Virgin forms, three on her right and four on her left, symbolise respectively the three theological and the four cardinal virtues. Four-and-twenty elders crowned with lilies, two and two, precede the car, signifying the sacred books of the Old Testament. Next to the car are the four mystic creatures of Ezechiel,<sup>1</sup> representing the four Evangelists. SS. Luke and Paul follow after, with the four writers of the other inspired Epistles, SS. Peter, James, Jude, and John. Last of all, the author of the Apocalypse :

“One single old man, sleeping<sup>2</sup> as he came,  
With a shrewd visage.”—*Purg.* xxix. 140.

On the other side of the stream stands Beatrice, her features veiled, who thus addresses him :

“Dante! weep not that Virgil leaves thee; nay,  
Weep thou not yet: behoves thee feel the edge  
Of other sword;<sup>3</sup> and thou shalt weep for that.

Observe me well. I am, in sooth, I am  
Beatrice. What! and hast thou deign'd at last  
Approach the mountain? Knewest not, O man!  
Thy happiness is here? Down fell mine eyes  
On the clear fount; but there, myself espying,  
Recoil'd, and sought the greensward; such a weight  
Of shame was on my forehead.”—*Purg.* xxx. 53, 71.

Of a sudden, the angels intone the psalm “In te, of Holies, Christ; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the will's free choice.”—*Civ. Dei*, xiii. 21. [The earthly Paradise symbolises both the Church herself and man, as supernaturally restored by her.]

<sup>1</sup> Ezech. i.

<sup>2</sup> “Sleeping,” because rapt in prophetic vision.

<sup>3</sup> That is, the confusion he will soon feel at Beatrice's reproaches.

Domine, speravi.”<sup>1</sup> The dulcet strains melt his heart ; he weeps, and, with renewed confidence, confesses his former errors. In order to deepen his penitence, Beatrice herself relates to the angels the story of his past :

“ These looks some time upheld him ; for I show’d  
My youthful eyes, and led him by their light  
In upright walking. Soon as I had reach’d  
The threshold of my second age, and changed  
My mortal for immortal ;<sup>2</sup> then he left me,  
And gave himself to others.<sup>3</sup> When from flesh  
To spirit I had risen, and increase  
Of beauty and of virtue circled me,  
I was less dear to him, and valued less.  
His steps were turn’d into deceitful ways,  
Following false images of good, that make  
No promise perfect. Nor avail’d me aught  
To sue for inspirations, with the which,  
I, both in dreams of night and otherwise,  
Did call him back ; of them, so little reck’d him,  
Such depth he fell, that all device was short  
Of his preserving, save that he should view  
The children of perdition. To this end  
I visited the purlieus of the dead ;  
And one, who hath conducted him thus high,  
Received my supplications urged with weeping.  
It were a breaking of God’s high decree  
If Lethe should be past, and such food tasted,  
Without the cost of some repentant tear.”

—*Purg.* xxx. 123.

Then turning to Dante, Beatrice, still veiled, exhorts him to contrition and true confession of his sins, without which he may not cross the stream of Lethe :

<sup>1</sup> “ In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped.”—*Ps.* xxx. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Beatrice died in her twenty-fifth year. According to Dante, this is the commencement of youth (*Conv.* iv. 24), *gioventù*, as distinguished from *adolescenza*.

<sup>3</sup> The poet became immersed in worldly cares and distractions, instead of applying himself to acquire true wisdom.

“‘Say thou, who stand’st beyond the holy stream,  
If this be true. A charge, so grievous, needs  
Thine own avowal.’

. . . . .  
A bitter sigh I drew, then scarce found voice  
To answer; hardly to these sounds my lips  
Gave utterance, wailing: ‘Thy fair looks withdrawn,  
Things present, with deceitful pleasures, turn’d  
My steps aside.’—*Purg. xxxi. 4, 29.*

Beatrice replies by accusations, which serve to intensify yet more his sense of sin :

“Lay thou aside the motive to this grief,  
And lend attentive ear, while I unfold  
How opposite a way my buried flesh  
Should have impell’d thee. Never didst thou spy  
In art or nature, aught so passing sweet,  
As were the limbs that in their beauteous frame  
Enclosed me, and are scatter’d now in dust.  
If sweetest thing thus fail’d thee with my death,  
What, afterward, of mortal, should thy wish  
Have tempted? When thou first hadst felt the dart  
Of perishable things, in my departing  
For better realms, thy wing thou shouldst have pruned  
To follow me; and never stoop’d again  
To bide a second blow, for a slight girl,  
Or other gaud as transient and as vain.  
The new and inexperienced bird awaits,  
Twice it may be, or thrice, the fowler’s aim;  
But in the sight of one whose plumes are full  
In vain the net is spread, the arrow wing’d.”

—*Purg. xxxi. 43.*

Dante is overwhelmed and conscience-stricken as she continues :

“I stood, as children silent and ashamed  
Stand, listening, with their eyes upon the earth,  
Acknowledging their fault, and self-condemned.  
And she resumed: ‘If, but to hear thus pains thee,

Raise thou thy beard,<sup>1</sup> and lo ! what sight shall do.'

No sooner lifted I mine aspect up,  
 Than I perceived those primal creatures cease<sup>2</sup>  
 Their flowery sprinkling ; and mine eyes beheld  
 (Yet unassured and wavering in their view)  
 Beatrice ; she, who towards the mystic Shape,<sup>3</sup>  
 That joins two natures in one form, had turned ;  
 And, even under shadow of her veil,  
 And parted by the verdant rill that flow'd  
 Between, in loveliness she seem'd as much  
 Her former self surpassing, as on earth  
 All others she surpass'd. Remorseful goads  
 Shot sudden through me. Each thing else, the more  
 Its love had late beguiled me, now the more  
 Was loathsome. On my heart so keenly smote  
 The bitter consciousness, that on the ground  
 O'erpower'd I fell : and what my state was then,  
 She knows, who was the cause."—*Purg.* xxxi. 62.

Upon regaining consciousness, the poet finds himself in the midst of Lethe, upheld by Matilda, who bears him on, "swift as a shuttle, bounding o'er the wave." As they approach the "blessed shore," the "Asperges me"<sup>4</sup> is sung so sweetly,

"That I,  
 May not remember, much less tell the sound."  
 —*Purg.* xxxi. 98.

Matilda immerses Dante in the waters, and thus compels him to drink of them. She then resigns him to four "lovely nymphs," the four cardinal virtues, and to the other three, "of deeper ken than ours," the three theo-

<sup>1</sup> Dante was a man of mature years, and his faults were more grave than mere youthful follies.

<sup>2</sup> The angels who surround Beatrice.

<sup>3</sup> The mystic Gryphon.

<sup>4</sup> From the Psalm *Miserere* (Ps. 1.), "Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed."



logical virtues, who implore Beatrice to reveal herself unveiled to the poet :

“Turn, Beatrice!’ was their song, ‘Oh! turn  
Thy saintly sight on this thy faithful one,  
Who, to behold thee, many a wearisome pace  
Hath measured. Gracious at our prayer, vouchsafe  
Unveil to him thy cheeks; that he may mark  
Thy second beauty, now conceal’d!<sup>1</sup> O splendour!  
O sacred light eternal!’

When under cope of the still-chiming heaven  
Thou gavest to open air thy charms reveal’d?  
Mine eyes with such an eager coveting  
Were bent to rid them of their ten years’ thirst,  
No other sense was waking.”—*Purg.* xxxi. 134, xxxii. 1.

After the early death of Beatrice, Dante had allowed his mind and heart to be engrossed by things of earth. His reunion with her, now that he is purified and fitted to receive divine wisdom and beatitude, forms the crowning point of the narration. For the story of the poet is the account of each human soul, and of the whole human race in its fall, repentance, purification, and final transformation in glory. The personal and individual experiences of his own life become the visible exponent of the operations of divine justice and grace.

The poet is now qualified to contemplate the past and future destinies of the Church. Amid the song of the angels who surround Beatrice, the triumphal procession of the Church moves on towards the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, emblematic of the Roman Empire. To this the triumphal car is attached.<sup>2</sup> Beatrice, Divine Wisdom, which presides over the teaching office of the

<sup>1</sup> The soul is revealed in the glance of the eyes and in the smile of the lips (*Conv.* ; ii. 8). In its mystic sense, this signifies the revelation of Divine Wisdom.

<sup>2</sup> The type of Rome, as the seat of the Empire and the Papacy.

Church, remains near the chariot, with her seven attendant virgins, bearing the seven lights, the gifts of the Holy Spirit. She is there to guard it during the absence of the Gryphon and the Elders, Christ and His Apostles, who have left the earth. Suddenly, an eagle swoops down upon the chariot, which reels like a storm-tossed vessel under the attack. Other foes succeed. A gaunt, hungry fox<sup>1</sup> steals inside the car; then the earth opens, and a dragon issues forth and tears away a portion of the frame-work. In these we see the heathen persecutors and soul-destroying heresies, especially that of Arius; the revolt of Mahomet; perhaps, also, the great schism and the worldliness of the clergy. The eagle again appears, and makes another assault on the chariot, leaving it "lined with his feathers." This is the secular power, by which the Church is so far estranged from her true mission, that she puts forth in different parts seven heads and ten horns.<sup>2</sup> Upon the now deformed chariot sits "una puttana sciolta," who is alternately fondled and scourged by the giant (France) at her side, and the latter finally draws the chariot into the depths of the forest.<sup>3</sup>

But Beatrice predicts the coming of a deliverer :

"Plainly I view, and therefore speak, the stars  
E'en now approaching, whose conjunction, free  
From all impediment and bar, brings on  
A season, in the which, One sent from God,

---

<sup>1</sup> "Foxes signify the insidious; and chiefly heretics, given to fraud, hiding themselves, and taking men in, by the winding ways of their holes, and withal, stinking with a nasty odour; against which odour, saith the Apostle, 'We are a sweet odour in every place' (2 Cor. ii. 15). These foxes are signified in the Canticle of Canticles, where it is said, 'Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines.'"—*Augustin. in Ps. lxxx. 13, v. 9.*

<sup>2</sup> Apoc. xiii. 1. It is probable that these represent the seven deadly sins.

<sup>3</sup> The removal of the Papal See to Avignon.

(Five hundred, five, and ten, do mark him out,<sup>5</sup>)  
 That foul one, and the accomplice of her guilt,  
 The giant, both, shall slay."—*Purg.* xxxiii. 40.

Hereupon Matilda, at the request of Beatrice, leads the poet to the spring Eunoe, that he may drink of those life-giving waters :

"I return'd  
 From the most holy wave, regenerate,  
 E'en as new plants renew'd with foliage new,  
 Pure and made apt for mounting to the stars."

—*Purg.* xxxiii. 139.

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<sup>5</sup> Slightly transposed, the numbers 515 form the word D.V.X. which points to a great military commander (Cf. *Hell*, i. 102), presumably Can Grande of Verona (Cf. *Par.* xvii. 74). In thus describing a name by numbers, Dante follows the example of the Apocalypse (xiii. 18), where the Emperor Nero is denoted by the number 666, according to the reckoning of the Hebrew letters.

## CHAPTER VI.

## PARADISE.

THE *Paradise* is comparatively little known. The subject, Heaven and its happiness, the heritage, though in varying degrees, of all the elect—forms a theme so sublime, that it transcends our sense and comprehension. The joy of the redeemed, the intensity and purity of their love, their strains of adoration and praise, their life of contemplation and peace, their immersion in the light of the truth, love, and bliss of the Godhead—all this cannot be conceived without some previous training both of the mind and imagination. This the poet foresaw, and has himself declared that only few and chosen souls could follow him.<sup>1</sup> Yet in the *Paradise* the deep mysteries of nature and grace are to find their solution, and earnest students will be rewarded for its perusal, no less by the charm of its verse than by the solid instruction and interior consolation it conveys. Those especially who, like the poet, have proved the deceitfulness of this world and fixed their hopes upon the next, will prize the *Paradise*. The poem is characterised by its definite teaching; the epic action is less prominent, though the dramatic power and dignity increase.

Purified by suffering in the fires of Purgatory, the soul now soars, free and unfettered, to Paradise. Like Hell and Purgatory, Paradise has its different gradations, corresponding to the varying classes of virtue and degrees of

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* ii. 1; see p. 5.

sanctity which the spirits possess. The nine spheres of the blessed, answering to the nine circles of Hell and the nine stages of Purgatory, are founded upon the Ptolemaic system, with its seven planets, its circle of the fixed stars and of the crystalline heaven. These nine concentric spheres form the universe, of which the earth is the fixed centre and irresistible point of attraction. Composed of two weighty elements, land and water, the earth is immediately surrounded by the two spheres of air and fire, and to the latter all flames soar aloft.

Outside the sphere of fire extends the heaven of the seven planets—the Moon, Mercury, and Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. Each of these planets revolves on its own axis from west to east, and describes a course in epicycles round a fixed invisible point in their heaven.<sup>1</sup> Beyond Saturn is the heaven of the fixed stars, whose period of revolution is the longest, because farthest from the earth. The outer circle, or ninth heaven, bears these inner systems along, in its rapid course of four-and-twenty hours, yet without disturbing the individual motion of each planet. This outer circle is the crystalline heaven, or *Primum Mobile*, from which proceed all motion, existence, and change. Outside the spheres, above all mutations of time and space, is the Heaven of light and fire, the Empyrean, the dwelling-place of the Eternal Godhead.

The angels and blessed, according to their degrees of glory, have each their places in the different spheres, though they are not restricted to them; for in the Empyrean, all find their beatitude in the immediate vision of God:

“Of Seraphim, he who is most enskied,  
Moses and Samuel, and either John,  
Choose which thou wilt, nor even Mary's self,  
Have not in other heaven their seats,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* ii. 4.

Than have those spirits which so late thou saw'st;  
 Nor more or fewer years exist; but all  
 Make the first circle beauteous, diversely  
 Partaking of sweet life, as more or less  
 Afflation of eternal bliss pervades them.  
 Here were they shown thee; not that fate assigns  
 This for their sphere, but for a sign to thee  
 Of that celestial furthest from the height.  
 Thus needs, that ye may apprehend, we speak:  
 Since from things sensible alone ye learn  
 That, which, digested rightly, after turns  
 To intellectual."—*Par.* iv. 28.

Thus the sphere slowest in its movement, the Moon, is inhabited by those who, inculpably, have not kept their vows. Mercury, an imperfect star, seldom visible because of the overpowering brightness of the sun, to which it is close, contains souls, which, but for earthly ambition, would have reached a higher place. In the sphere of Venus are those souls whose spiritual life was marred by human attachments, though long since expiated. And as the Sun is the source of light to all the planets, so within its sphere we find the great theologians whose teaching has illumined the world. The Crusaders and champions of the faith occupy the sphere of Mars. In the sixth, that of Jupiter, are the great ones of the earth, kings and just judges. Saturn, whose orbit, far removed from the rest, typifies the time when "no ill had power to harm,"<sup>1</sup> is the abode of the contemplative Saints. The Heaven of the fixed stars is assigned to Saints of special pre-eminence by their offices and graces, Adam and Eve, the Holy Apostles, and, supreme above all, Mary the Mother of God. Finally, in the crystalline heaven, or *Primum Mobile*, are the angels, who in their several hierarchies rule the stars.

But these differing degrees of felicity excite neither regret nor envy among the redeemed, for they declare:

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* xxi. 25.

"Our will  
Is, in composure, settled by the power  
Of charity, who makes us will alone  
What we possess, and nought beyond desire:  
If we should wish to be exalted more,  
Then must our wishes jar with the high will  
Of Him, Who sets us here."—*Par.* iii. 69.

The glory of the elect in their divers spheres is depicted by Dante with all his originality and imaginative power. Spiritual relations and conditions are everywhere clothed in forms, wondrous indeed, but never exaggerated, for his refined feeling forbids such treatment of things divine. As the poem advances, though his individual action is less seen, yet it is his own ascent which he describes, and through him and with him we behold the invisible world, in company with Beatrice, who leaves him finally within the mystic rose, when Dante invokes her for the last time :

"O lady! thou in whom my hopes have rest;  
Who, for my safety, hast not scorn'd, in hell  
To leave the traces of thy footsteps mark'd;  
For all mine eyes have seen, I to thy power  
And goodness, virtue owe and grace. Of slave  
Thou hast to freedom brought me: and no means,  
For my deliverance apt, hast left untried.  
Thy liberal bounty still toward me keep:  
That, when my spirit, which thou madest whole  
Is loosen'd from this body, it may find  
Favour with thee."—*Par.* xxxi. 71.

Amid the joys of Paradise the poet still remembers the world and his fatherland, but he views them and all earthly things as a prophet on high. Earnest in purpose, often sharp and incisive in utterance, he exposes the sins of his countrymen, and condemns with his old severity every fault he perceives, however high in rank the offender.

Shortly after the completion of his great work the poet

died, absorbed, like a true Christian, in the contemplation of the glory of God. To expire thus, with the sins of his life expiated, his life-work finished, and his soul prepared for eternity, was surely a mark of divine predilection.

We must now accompany Dante in his ascent through the spheres. He is still in the earthly Paradise, by his side stands Beatrice. It is the dawn of the seventh day, and the sun is rising over the western hemisphere, when to the left he sees

"Beatrice turn'd, and on the sun  
Gazing, as never eagle fix'd his ken."—*Par. i. 45.*

Then as he looks upon her, the type of the divine grace and wisdom, through which alone<sup>1</sup> the soul rises to God, Dante is rapt in ecstasy. Outspread on every side, he beholds a boundless sea of light; his ear catches the harmony of the spheres, the unison of the divine scheme of creation, in which no false note sounds. Beatrice and Dante are, she tells him, no longer on earth, but ascending with more than lightning speed. For as the flame mounts upwards, so the purified soul, released from its sinful fetters, by the very law of its nature ascends to God, and rises higher, as it apprehends more clearly the divine perfections:

"Thou no more admire  
Thy soaring, (if I rightly deem), than lapse  
Of torrent downwards from a mountain's height.  
There would in thee for wonder be more cause,  
If, free of hindrance, thou had stay'd below,  
As living fire unmoved upon the earth."—*Par. i. 131.*

They enter first within the sphere of the Moon, which Dante thus describes:

"Meseem'd as if a cloud had cover'd us,  
Translucent, solid, firm, and polish'd bright,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Conv. iii. 14, 15.*



Like adamant, which the sun's beam had smit.  
 Within itself the ever-during pearl  
 Received us; as the wave a ray of light  
 Receives, and rests unbroken."—*Par. ii. 31.*

Beatrice takes occasion to explain the influence of the heavenly bodies, and their various changes :

"Thus do these organs of the world proceed,  
 As thou beholdest now, from step to step;  
 Their influences from above deriving,  
 And thence transmitting downwards."—*Par. ii. 120.*

Here for the first time, Dante sees the forms of the redeemed :

"As through translucent and smooth glass, or wave  
 Clear and unmoved, and flowing not so deep  
 As that its bed is dark, the shape returns  
 So faint of our impictured lineaments,  
 That on white forehead set, a pearl as strong  
 Comes to the eye; such saw I many a face."

—*Par. iii. 9.*

7  
 ' Piccarda, sister of his brother-in-law, Corso Donati, a cloistered nun, who was torn from her convent by her relatives and friends, and affianced to Roselino della Tosa, a Florentine nobleman, now makes herself known to the poet :

"I was a virgin sister in the earth:  
 And if thy mind observe me well, this form,  
 With such addition graced of loveliness,  
 Will not conceal me long; but thou wilt know  
 Piccarda, in the tardiest sphere thus placed,  
 Here 'mid these other blessed also blest.

. . . . .  
 And this condition, which appears so low,  
 Is for this cause assign'd us, that our vows  
 Were, in some part, neglected and made void."

—*Par. iii. 46.*

She proceeds to express the calm satisfaction of those holy souls, who feel neither grief nor envy in regard to those of higher grades :

"Our hearts, whose high affections burn alone  
With pleasure from the Holy Spirit conceived,  
Admitted to His order, dwell in joy."—*Par.* iii. 52.

Near Piccarda, and, like her, snatched "from the pleasant cloister's pale," by men "for ill than good more apt," is Constance, mother of the Emperor Frederic II. Accordingly, the nature of vows and the power of dispensing from them, forms the subject of Beatrice's next instruction to the poet.

The second sphere, that of Mercury, is now reached :

"And as the arrow, ere the cord is still,  
Leapeth unto its mark ; so on we sped  
Into the second realm. There I beheld  
The dame, so joyous, enter, that the orb  
Grew brighter at her smiles."—*Par.* v. 90.

Here Dante finds the Emperor Justinian :

"Destined by the will  
Of that prime love, whose influence I feel,  
From vain excess to clear the incumbent laws."<sup>1</sup>  
—*Par.* vi. 11.

Justinian narrates the history of the Roman Empire from the foundation of Rome to Charlemagne, and thence proceeds to censure the intense selfishness which characterised alike Guelfs and Ghibellines.<sup>2</sup> With Justinian, all those

<sup>1</sup> The work of legislation is, for the poet, an operation of the Holy Ghost. Justinian only aimed at expurgating repetitions and contradictory decisions from the already existing laws, not at creating new acts. Cf. *Cod. Repetit. Prælect.* § 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.* vi. 102.

"Whose mortal lives were busied to that end,  
That honour and renown might wait on them:  
And, when desires thus err in their intention,  
True love must needs ascend with slacker beam."

—*Par. vi. 118.*

Here also is Romeo, the noble and disinterested minister of Raymond Berenger, Count of Provence. By his wise counsels he increased the Count's revenues, provided royal alliances for his daughters, and was rewarded by the blackest ingratitude. In Romeo's fate the poet describes his own :

"Aged and poor  
He parted thence: and if the world did know  
The heart he had, begging his life by morsels,  
'Twould deem the praise it yields him, scantily dealt."

—*Par. vi. 141.*

As Justinian has explained the history of the Roman Empire, man's guide to temporal happiness, so, as they soar higher, Beatrice unfolds the mysteries of man's fall and redemption, and his way through the Church to eternal happiness, which only minds enlightened by divine love can comprehend :

"Brother! no eye of man not perfected,  
Nor fully ripen'd in the flame of love,  
May fathom this decree."—*Par. vii. 55.*

From the "new loveliness" that graces Beatrice, Dante becomes aware that they have been wafted into a higher sphere. It is that of Venus :

"And as in flame  
A sparkle is distinct, or voice in voice  
Discern'd, when one its even tenour keeps,  
The other comes and goes; so in that light  
I other luminaries saw, that coursed  
In circling motion, rapid more or less,

As their eternal vision each impels.

And after them, who in the van appear'd,  
Such an Hosanna sounded as hath left  
Desire, ne'er since extinct in me, to hear  
Renew'd the strain."—*Par.* viii. 18.

Here the souls appear all irradiated with light, which shines around, and shrouds them "as an animal in its own silk enswathed." Charles Martel is the first to speak, and to Dante's question how evil sons come of good parents, and good sons of evil parents, replies that it is due to the law of individuality, which is everywhere manifested in creation :<sup>1</sup>

"In her circuitous course,  
Nature, that is the seal to mortal wax,  
Doth well her art, but no distinction owns  
"Twixt one or other household. Hence befalls  
That Esau is so wide of Jacob: hence  
Quirinus of so base a father springs,  
He dates from Mars his lineage."—*Par.* viii. 132.

But every man should be brought up to fill the place for which his natural disposition fits him, otherwise he will fail or but poorly succeed :

"Nature ever,  
Finding discordant fortune, like all seed  
Out of its proper climate, thrives but ill.  
And were the world below content to mark

---

<sup>1</sup> [Dante, following Aristotle, teaches that the diversity of gifts and dispositions in mankind are ordained by Providence for the benefit of human society, which requires a variety of qualifications in its members for the diverse service of the state. This difference of dispositions is partly due, according to the divine plan, to the influence of the heavenly bodies at the time of each infant's birth; for by nature the child would inherit the dispositions of the parent. But Dante is careful to show that whatever effect the stars might produce on the human temperament, the character ultimately depends on the good or bad use of the individual free will.] See *Purg.* xvi. 75-82. Cary *in loc.*

And work on the foundation nature lays,  
It would not lack supply of excellence."—*Par.* viii. 145.

Near Charles Martel are Cunizza, sister of the cruel Ezzolino, and Folco the Troubadour. In their lifetime they were overcome by the "light of Venus;" now grief for their sin is absorbed in ceaseless thanksgiving for their deliverance:

"Yet I nought repine,  
Nor grudge myself the cause of this my lot:  
Which haply vulgar hearts can scarce conceive.

. . . . .  
And yet there bides  
No sorrowful repentance here, but mirth,  
Not for the fault, that doth not come to mind,  
But for the virtue, whose o'erruling sway  
And providence have wrought thus quaintly. Here  
The skill is look'd into, that fashioneth<sup>1</sup>  
With such effectual working, and the good  
Discern'd, accruing to the lower world  
From this above."—*Par.* ix. 34, 99.

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<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine expands this thought (*Civ. Dei*, xii. 30, 4) by distinguishing between experimental and theoretical knowledge. "The soul then shall have an intellectual remembrance of its past ill, but so far as regards sensible experience they shall be wholly forgotten. For a skilled physician knows indeed professionally all diseases, but experimentally only those from which he has himself suffered. As, then, the knowledge of evil is twofold, the one by mental insight, the other by sensible experience, in two ways also can it be forgotten. The skilled and learned (physician), through neglect of his profession, may forget sufferings; the patient, through escape from them. And in this latter way will the saints forget their past ill, for their deliverance from them will be so complete, that they will be entirely blotted out of their experience. But their intellectual knowledge, which will be great, will keep them acquainted not only with their own past woes, but with the eternal sufferings of the lost. Were they indeed to become unconscious of their past miseries, how could they, as the Psalmist says, lxxxviii. 2, sing for ever the mercies of God. . . . In that city of God there will be free will, one in all and indivisible in each, freed from all evil and filled with all good, enjoying indefectibly the sweetness of eternal bliss, oblivious of sins, oblivious of sufferings, and yet not so oblivious of its deliverance as to be ungrateful to its Deliverer."—*Ibid.* 3. Cf. Dod's trans.

Rahab, who furthered Josue's glorious enterprise in the Holy Land, is also here.

Dante now mounts with Beatrice to the Sun :

“ Weetless of ascent,  
But as a man, that weets him come, ere thinking.  
For Beatrice, she who passeth on  
So suddenly from good to better, time  
Counts not the act.”—*Par. x. 31.*

Here objects are distinguished, not by their colour, but by their light :

“ What there was i' th' sun,  
(Where I had enter'd), not through change of hue,  
But light transparent—did I summon up  
Genius, art, practice.—I might not so speak,  
It should be e'er imagined : yet believed  
It may be, and the sight be justly craved.  
And if our fantasy fail of such height,  
What marvel, since no eye above the sun  
Hath ever travel'd ? ”—*Par. x. 36.*

Beatrice exhorts Dante to thank the invisible “Sun of Angels,” by whose grace he had been raised up to the visible sun :

“ Never was heart in such devotion bound,  
And with complacency so absolute  
Disposed to render up itself to God,  
As mine was at those words : and so entire  
The love for Him, that held me, it eclipsed  
Beatrice in oblivion.”—*Par. x. 51.*

Beatrice feels no displeasure, but only joy in being thus forgotten, and

“ Smiled thereat so joyously,  
That of her laughing eyes the radiance brake,  
And scattered my collected mind abroad.”

—*Par. x. 57.*

Now, as stars are gathered round their pole, so these

blessed spirits, like "burning suns," circle thrice in mystic measure round Beatrice and Dante with joyous strains. As the sounds cease, St. Thomas Aquinas leads the poet into the approaching circle of great theologians, and thus addresses him :

"I, then, was of the lambs that Dominic  
Leads, for his saintly flock, along the way  
Where well they thrive, not swoln with vanity.  
He, nearest on my right hand, brother was  
And master to me : Albert of Cologne  
Is this ; and, of Aquinum Thomas I.  
If thou of all the rest would'st be assured,  
Let thine eye, waiting on the words I speak,  
In circuit journey round the blessed wreath.  
That next resplendence issues from the smile  
Of Gratian, who to either former lent<sup>1</sup>  
Such help, as favour wins in Paradise.  
The other, nearest, who adorns our quire,  
Was Peter, he that with the widow gave  
To Holy Church his treasure.<sup>2</sup> The fifth light,  
Goodliest of all, is by such love inspired,  
That all your world craves tidings of his doom :  
Within, there is the lofty light, endow'd  
With sapience so profound, if truth be truth,  
That with a ken of such wide amplitude  
No second hath arisen.<sup>3</sup> Next behold  
That taper's radiance, to whose view was shown,  
Clearliest, the nature and the ministry  
Angelical, while yet in flesh it dwelt.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The spiritual and temporal administration of justice.

<sup>2</sup> This is a play upon the words of Peter Lombard in the prologue to his Book iv. *Senten.* : "Desiring of our slender means to cast something with the poor widow into the treasury of the Lord."—*Mark* xii. 42 ; *Luke* xxi. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Solomon, as the author of *Proverbs*, of *Ecclesiastes the Preacher*, and of the *Canticle of Canticles*.

<sup>4</sup> Dionysius the Areopagite, the reputed author of the *De Coelesti Hierarchia*. In Dante's time no doubt had yet arisen as to the authorship of this book, then attributed to Dionysius, St. Paul's convert, who, according to tradition, died in Paris.

In the other little light serenely smiles  
 That pleader for the Christian temples, he  
 Who did provide Augustine of his lore.<sup>1</sup>  
 Now, if thy mind's eye pass from light to light,  
 Upon my praises following, of the eighth  
 Thy thirst is next. The saintly soul<sup>2</sup> that shows  
 The world's deceitfulness, to all who hear him,  
 Is, with the sight of all the good that is,  
 Blest there. The limbs, whence it was driven, lie  
 Down in Cieldauro; and from martyrdom  
 And exile came it here. Lo! further on,  
 Where flames the arduous spirit of Isidore;<sup>3</sup>  
 Of Bede;<sup>4</sup> and Richard,<sup>5</sup> more than man, erewhile  
 In deep discernment. Lastly this, from whom  
 Thy look on me reverteth, was the beam  
 Of one, whose spirit, on high musings bent,  
 Rebuked the lingering tardiness of death.  
 It is the eternal light of Sigebert<sup>6</sup>  
 Who escaped not envy, when of truth he argued,  
 Reading in the straw-litter'd street."<sup>7</sup>—*Par. x. 91.*

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<sup>1</sup> By St. Augustine's request, Paulus Orosius wrote his work *Historiarum L. VII. adv. Paganos*, an universal history coming down to his own times, to prove that the disasters which befell the later Roman Empire were not caused by the preaching of Christianity. St. Augustine treats this subject exhaustively in his *De Civitate Dei*. Some commentators suppose that this seventh spirit is St. Ambrose.

<sup>2</sup> Anicius Manlius Torquatus Severinus Boethius, now canonised (d. 525), wrote *De Consolatione Philosophicæ*, a work much read in the Middle Ages. His grave was shown in the Church of St. Peter at Pavia, called the Cield'auro.

<sup>3</sup> Isidore of Seville (d. 636) wrote *Libros XX. Originum seu Etymologiarum*, a compendious encyclopedia of all sciences, collected with great industry. This book had a marked influence on theology in the West.

<sup>4</sup> Venerable Bede (d. 735) passed his whole life in the monastery of Wearmouth in Northumbria, and wrote many theological and scientific works. "Aut discere, aut docere, aut scribere dulce habui," was his motto.

<sup>5</sup> Richard of St. Victor, educated in the monastery of that name in Paris; in 1164 became Prior, and was eminent as a mystic. His principal works are *Benjamin minor, sive de preparatione animi ad contemplationem*, and *Benjamin major, sive de contemplatione*.

<sup>6</sup> A monk of the Abbey of Gemblours. See note 2, p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> The Rue de Fouarre, the name of a street in Paris. Cary in loc.



Surrounded by this blissful circle of exalted spirits, the poet now first realises the utter vanity of all earthly aims :

“O fond anxiety of mortal men !  
 How vain and inconclusive arguments  
 Are those, which make thee beat thy wings below.  
 For statutes one, and one for aphorisms<sup>1</sup>  
 Was hunting ; this the priesthood follow'd ; that,  
 By force or sophistry, aspired to rule ;  
 To rob, another ; and another sought,  
 By civil business, wealth ; one, moiling, lay  
 Tangled in net of sensual delight ;  
 And one to wistless indolence resign'd ;  
 What time from all these empty things escaped,  
 With Beatrice, I thus gloriously  
 Was raised aloft, and made the guest of Heaven.”

—*Par.* xi. i.

St. Thomas the Dominican extols St. Francis of Assisi and his sons, whilst St. Bonaventure, the Franciscan friar, in return praises St. Dominic. Both lament the decay of discipline which then prevailed in their respective Orders. St. Bonaventure next proceeds to enumerate the great theologians here assembled—Hugh of St. Victor,<sup>2</sup> Peter Comester,<sup>3</sup> Peter Hispanus,<sup>4</sup> the prophet Nathan, St. Chrysostom, Donatus,<sup>5</sup> Rabanus Maurus,<sup>6</sup> and Joachim

<sup>1</sup> The study of medicine. A writing of Hippocrates is entitled *Aphorisms*.

<sup>2</sup> A German monk of St. Victor's monastery in Paris, of the noble family of Blankenburg, a great mystic ; *b.* 1097, *d.* 1179.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Mangiador ; his universal history, *Historia Scholastica*, was much esteemed in the Middle Ages ; *d.* 1179.

<sup>4</sup> Afterwards Pope John XXI. He wrote *Summula Logicales* ; *d.* 1277.

<sup>5</sup> Ælius Donatus (*c.* 350 A.D.), a professor of grammar in Rome. St. Jerome was one of his disciples. His grammar was in general use during the Middle Ages.

<sup>6</sup> Rabanus Maurus, Abbot of Fulda. He was made Archbishop of Mayence in 847, an ecclesiastical writer and promoter of science ; *d.* 856.

the Abbot of Flora.<sup>1</sup> The glory of these blessed spirits suggests to the poet an inquiry into the nature of risen bodies, to which St. Thomas replies.

Dante rises to still "more lofty bliss" in the sphere of Mars, where shines the adorable sign of the Cross. In the midst of its glowing light is seen the figure of the Crucified; for those who have fought and suffered for their Lord are grouped to represent His form. Their souls flash like myriad flames, and circle within the rays of the Cross, the scintillations signifying their constant increase of glory from their communion with their Lord :

" Christ

Beam'd on that Cross; and pattern fails me now.  
But whoso takes his cross, and follows Christ,  
Will pardon me for that I leave untold,  
When in the flecker'd dawning he shall spy  
The glitterance of Christ. From horn to horn,  
And 'tween the summit and the base, did move  
Lights, scintillating, as they met and pass'd."

—*Par.* xiv. 96.

One of these is the poet's ancestor, Cacciaguida, who, recognising Dante, describes the good old times of the Florentine republic, the simple home-life of its citizens, and then predicts the poverty and exile awaiting the poet :

"Thou shalt leave each thing

Beloved most dearly: this is the first shaft  
Shot from the bow of exile. Thou shalt prove  
How salt the savour is of others' bread;  
How hard the passage, to descend and climb  
By other's stairs. But that shall gall thee most,  
Will be the worthless and vile company,

---

<sup>1</sup> Abbot Joachim of Flora in Calabria (d. 1202). The "introduction in *Evangelium eternum*," containing the errors of the later Spiritualists, was falsely ascribed to him. For a detailed account of his real relations with the Church and the Popes, see Reuter ii. 193, *et passim*. But it must be owned that, involuntarily, his interpretations of the Apocalypse gave a handle to these calumnies.

With whom thou must be thrown into these straits.  
 For all ungrateful, impious all, and mad,  
 Shall turn 'gainst thee: but in a little while,  
 Theirs, and not thine, shall be the crimson'd brow.  
 Their course shall so evince their brutishness,  
 To have ta'en thy stand apart shall well become thee."

—*Par.* xvii. 55.

Cacciaguida points out other heroes of the faith within this sphere—Josue, Judas Maccabeus, Charlemagne, Roland, Godfrey de Bouillon, and Robert Guiscard.<sup>1</sup>

Again they are borne from the ruddy glow of Mars up to the "silvery whiteness" of that temperate star Jupiter, the abode of the just kings. Here the blessed spirits shine like glowing sparks of fire, whilst they chant "*Diligite justitiam qui judicatis terram!*" Gradually the spirits assume the form of an eagle, the emblem of just government and of the Roman Empire:

"Before my sight appear'd, with open wings,  
 The beautiful image, in fruition sweet,  
 Gladdening the thronged spirits. Each did seem  
 A little ruby, whereon so intense  
 The sunbeam glow'd, that to mine eyes it came  
 In clear refraction. And that, which next  
 Befalls me to portray, voice hath not utter'd,  
 Nor hath ink written, nor in fantasy  
 Was e'er conceived."—*Par.* xix. 1.

The poet now seeks from the mystic eagle the solution of his difficulties concerning the Divine justice in the scheme of man's redemption and final reward:

"O perennial flowers  
 Of gladness everlasting! that exhale  
 In single breath your odours manifold;  
 Breathe now: and let the hunger be appeased,

---

<sup>1</sup> Both Godfrey de Bouillon and Robert Guiscard fought against the Saracens, the latter in South Italy; Guiscard was also the defender of Pope Gregory VII.

That with great craving long hath held my soul,  
 Finding no food on earth. This well I know;  
 That if there be in heaven a realm, that shows  
 In faithful mirror the celestial Justice,  
 Yours without veil reflects it. Ye discern  
 The heed, wherewith I do prepare myself  
 To hearken; ye, the doubt, that urges me  
 With such inveterate craving."—*Par.* xix. 20.

In the lines following Dante explains the nature of his doubt.

"A man  
 Is born on Indus' banks, and none is there  
 Who speaks of Christ, nor who doth read nor write;  
 And all his inclinations and his acts,  
 As far as human reason sees, are good;  
 And he offendeth not in word or deed:  
 But unbaptized he dies, and void of faith.  
 Where is the justice that condemns him? Where  
 His blame, if he believeth not?"—*Par.* xix. 66.

[Dante shows, as we shall see, that all men, even heathen, can be saved, by placing some who lived and died externally as Pagans among the blessed.<sup>1</sup>] As to the inequalities of the dispensation of grace, the eagle replies:

"What then,  
 And who art thou, that on the stool would'st sit  
 To judge at distance of a thousand miles  
 With the short-sighted vision of a span?  
 To him, who subtilises thus with me,  
 There would assuredly be room for doubt

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<sup>1</sup> Of the possibility of salvation for a savage born and reared in the backwoods, and who follows the voice of conscience, St. Thomas says: "It is certain that God will impart to him the necessary truths of faith, either through interior illumination, or through a preacher of the faith."—*De Vero*, q. 14, a. 11 ad 1. "For God never suffers any one to want what is necessary to his salvation, if he only desires it. No one loses his soul save through his own fault; since God makes known to him truths which are essential to his salvation, either through interior revelation, or, as in the case of Cornelius, by the voice of a preacher."—*In iii. Sent.* d. 28, q. 3, a. 1-2.

Even to wonder, did not the safe word  
 Of Scripture hold supreme authority.  
 'O animals of clay! O spirits groes!'  
 The Primal Will, that in itself is good,  
 Hath from itself, the chief Good, ne'er been moved.  
 Justice consists in consonance with it,  
 Derivable by no created good,  
 Whose very cause depends upon its beam."

—*Par.* xix. 74.

After censuring the injustice of kings and princes, the eagle informs the poet that the various members of his body are the spirits of princes, pre-eminent for their virtues :

"The part in me, that sees and bears the sun  
 In mortal eagles, (it began) must now  
 Be noted stedfastly; for, of the fires  
 That figure me, those glittering in mine eye  
 Are chief of all the greatest. This, that shines  
 Midmost for pupil, was the same who sang  
 The Holy Spirit's song, and bare about  
 The ark from town to town: now doth he know  
 The merit of his soul-impassion'd strains  
 By their well-fitted guerdon."—*Par.* xx. 29.

Prominent among these great souls who form the members of the mystic eagle are King Ezechias, the Emperor Constantine, William the Good, king of Sicily, the Emperor Trajan<sup>1</sup> and Ripheus the Trojan.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> According to a mediæval legend, Trajan was recalled to this earth from Hell by the intercession of St. Gregory, and received the true faith. "If the story is to be defended at all," says Bellarmine, "we must say that Trajan was not absolutely damned in Hell, but was only punished there for his then demerits, the (final) sentence being suspended on account of St. Gregory's prayer (foreseen). Nor did he pass immediately from Hell, but after his soul's reunion with its body, was baptized and did penance on earth. Such is the explanation of St. Thomas (Supp. q. 71, a. 5 ad 5). But as Trajan's resurrection was witnessed by no one, and as the fact is not recorded by any ancient author, I prefer the opinion of Melchior Canus that the story is fictitious."—*Bellarmino, De Controv.* ii. ; *De. Purgat.* ii. cap. viii.

<sup>2</sup> The Trojan Ripheus, whom Virgil describes as :

"Just of his word, observant of the right."—*Æn.* ii. 53.

Again Dante fixes his eyes upon Beatrice, in whom his  
 I finds all contentment ; but

“ No smile she wore :

And, ‘ Did I smile,’ quoth she, ‘ thou would’st be straight  
 Like Semele when into ashes turn’d :  
 For, mounting these eternal palace-stairs,  
 My beauty, which the loftier it climbs,  
 As thou hast noted, still doth kindle more,  
 So shines, that, were no tempering interposed,  
 Thy mortal puissance would from its rays  
 Shrink, as the leaf doth from the thunderbolt.’ ”

—*Par.* xxi. 3.

They have already entered the sphere of Saturn :

“ Within the crystal, which records the name  
 (As its remoter circle girds the world)  
 Of that loved monarch, in whose happy reign  
 No ill had power to harm.”—*Par.* xxi. 22.

Here the redeemed, glittering like stars in splendour,  
 ascend and descend a ladder “ in colour like to sun-illuminated  
 gold ; ” its summit reaching far beyond the poet’s ken.  
 This is the realm of contemplative souls. The sweet  
 symphony of Paradise here is no longer heard ; its strains  
 are too supernatural for the poet’s ear to detect, as the  
 smile of Beatrice becomes too radiant for his eye to behold.  
 St. Peter Damian, the contemplative saint, first approaches,  
 and unfolds the mystery of the divine election of grace, by  
 which each soul has its appointed guide and patron :

“ Not the soul

That is in heaven most lustrous, nor the seraph  
 That hath his eyes most fix’d on God, shall solve  
 What thou hast ask’d : for in the abyss it lies  
 Of th’ everlasting statute sunk so low,  
 That no created ken may fathom it.  
 And to the mortal world when thou return’st,  
 Be this reported : that none henceforth dare  
 Direct his footsteps to so dread a bourn.”—*Par.* xxi. 85.

In burning, scathing words St. Peter Damian contrasts the corruption and avarice of the secular clergy with the holy poverty of St. Peter. When he ceases to speak, the chorus of redeemed spirits unites with voices loud as thunder in praying, that those unworthy pastors may not escape the chastisement they have merited. At the sound, the poet is overcome by fear and amazement :

"Astounded, to the guardian of my steps  
I turn'd me, like the child who always runs  
Thither for succour, where he trusted most."

—*Par. xxii. 1.*

St. Benedict next relates the glorious history of his Order, laments its degeneracy, and describes his sons as  
 "sacks choked up with musty meal."<sup>1</sup>

Swift as a whirlwind the saints upward fly, and Beatrice beckons the poet to follow them. Entering the heaven of the fixed stars at the point indicated by the sign of Gemini, the Twins, under which constellation Dante was born, he casts one last lingering look upon the earth beneath him :

"And with mine eye return'd  
Through all the seven spheres; and saw this globe  
So pitiful of semblance, that perforce  
It moved my smiles; and him in truth I hold  
For wisest, who esteems it least; whose thoughts  
Elsewhere are fix'd, him worthiest call and best."

—*Par. xxii. 129*

The poet has entered the heaven of the fixed stars. There, in the splendour of His glorified humanity, our Lord dwells surrounded by Mary and the Holy Apostles :

"And, through the living Light, so lustrous glow'd  
The substance, that my ken endured it not."

—*Par. xxiii. 31.*

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<sup>1</sup> *Par. xxii. 76*

More radiant than ever is the smile of Beatrice, which the poet, whose sight is supernaturally strengthened, can now behold :

“ As erewhile  
Through glance of sunlight, stream'd through broken cloud,  
Mine eyes a flower-besprinkled mead have seen,  
Though veiled themselves in shade : so saw I there  
Legions of splendours, on whom burning rays  
Shed lightnings from above ; yet saw I not  
The fountain whence they flow'd.”—*Par.* xxiii. 76.

But he is unable yet to sustain the glory of Christ Himself, Who has ascended into these supernal realms, from whence He illumines the vast multitude of the elect.

With reverent homage the Angel Gabriel salutes the Queen of Heaven, and his salutation is re-echoed by the blessed spirits in the strains of the “ *Regina Cæli* : ”

“ Oh, what o'erflowing plenty is up-piled  
In those rich-laden coffers,<sup>1</sup> which below  
Sow'd the good seed, whose harvest now they keep !  
Here are the treasures tasted, that with tears  
Were in the Babylonian exile won,  
When gold had fail'd them. Here, in synod high  
Of ancient council with the new convened,  
Under the Son of Mary and of 'God,  
Victorious he his mighty triumph holds,<sup>2</sup>  
To whom the keys of glory were assign'd.”

—*Par.* xxiii. 125.

Beatrice petitions the host of the redeemed to admit her charge to the heavenly banquet :

“ O ye! in chosen fellowship advanced  
To the great supper of the Blessed Lamb,  
Whereon who feeds hath every wish fulfill'd ;

<sup>1</sup> In the Apostles and Saints is preserved the fruit gathered up for eternal life.

<sup>2</sup> St. Peter.



If to this man through God's grace be vouchsafed  
 Foretaste of that, which from your table falls,  
 Or ever death his fated term prescribe;  
 Be ye not heedless of his urgent will:  
 But may some influence of your sacred dews  
 Sprinkle him. Of the fount ye alway drink,  
 Whence flows what most he craves."—*Par.* xxiv. 1.

But not till Dante is proved worthy can her request be granted. St. Peter therefore first examines him as to his faith:

"The costly jewel on the which  
 Is founded every virtue."—*Par.* xxiv. 88.

St. James next interrogates him as to his hope, which is

"Of the joy to come a sure expectance,  
 The effect of grace divine, and merit preceding."  
 —*Par.* xxv. 67.

Lastly, St. John questions him as to his love. For these three theological virtues are necessary for the soul to gain sight of Paradise. The poet's entrance is, however, again delayed by the sudden apparition of Adam, who describes his sojourn in the earthly Paradise, his expulsion from it, and the confusion of tongues at Babel. His story ended, a sweet entrancing chant resounds on every side:

"Then 'Glory to the Father, to the Son,  
 And to the Holy Spirit,' rang aloud  
 Throughout all Paradise; that with the song  
 My spirit reel'd, so passing sweet the strain.  
 And what I saw was equal ecstasy:  
 One universal smile it seem'd of all things;  
 Joy past compare, gladness unutterable,  
 Imperishable life of peace and love,  
 Exhaustless riches, and unmeasured bliss."

—*Par.* xxvii. 1.

Once again the poet's upward flight is stayed by St. Peter's fiery invective against Pope Boniface VIII.:

"My place  
 He who usurps on earth, my place, ay, mine,  
 Which in the presence of the Son of God  
 Is void."—*Par.* xxvii. 19.

At his words the very heavens are darkened :

"And as the unblemish'd dame, who in herself  
 Secure of censure, yet at bare report  
 Of other's failing, shrinks with maiden fear ;  
 So Beatrice in her semblance changed,  
 And such eclipse in Heaven, methinks, was seen  
 When the Most Holy suffer'd."—*Par.* xxvii. 28.

As she ascends into the ninth sphere, the celestial beauty of Beatrice is again enhanced ; and while gazing at her, the poet himself is borne upward. He sees the nine angelic choirs, who in concentric circles revolve round their centre, the Ever-blessed Trinity. Beatrice explains the creation and fall of the angels, their nature and operations. She concludes by censuring the vain, unprofitable preaching prevalent among the clergy :

"The aim of all  
 Is how to shine : e'en they, whose office is  
 To preach the gospel, let the gospel sleep,  
 And pass their own inventions off instead.  
 One tells, how at Christ's suffering, the wan moon  
 Bent back her steps, and shadow'd o'er the sun  
 With intervenient disk, as she withdrew :  
 Another, how the light shrouded itself  
 Within its tabernacle, and left dark  
 The Spaniard and the Indian, with the Jew.<sup>1</sup>  
 Such fables Florence in her pulpit hears  
 Bandied about more frequent, than the names  
 Of Bindi and of Lapi in her streets.

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<sup>1</sup> Dante here condemns vain and unwarrantable interpretations of the Holy Scriptures.

The sheep, meanwhile, poor witless ones, return  
 From pasture, fed with wind : and what avails  
 For their excuse, they do not see their harm ?  
 Christ said not to His first conventicle,  
 'Go forth and preach impostures to the world,'  
 But gave them truth to build on, and the sound  
 Was mighty on their lips ; nor needed they  
 Beside the gospel, other spear or shield  
 To aid them in their warfare for the faith.  
 The preacher now provides himself with store  
 Of jests and gibes ; and so there be no lack  
 Of laughter, while he vents them, his big cowl  
 Distends, and he has won the meed he sought."

—*Par.* xxix. 99.

Ascending to the Heaven of Heavens (the Empyrean),  
 Beatrice's countenance attains a perfection which cannot  
 be described :

"If all that hitherto is told of her  
 Were in one praise concluded, 'twere too weak  
 To furnish out this theme. Mine eyes did look  
 On beauty, such as I believe, in sooth,  
 Not merely to exceed our human ; but  
 That, save its Maker, none can to the full  
 Enjoy it. At this point, o'erpowered, I fail,  
 Unequal to my theme, as never bard  
 Of buskin or of sock hath fail'd before.  
 For as the sun doth to the feeblest sight,  
 E'en so remembrance of that witching smile  
 Hath dispossessed my spirit of itself.  
 Not from that day, when on this earth I first  
 Beheld her charms, up to that view of them,  
 Have I with song applausive ever ceased  
 To follow ; but now follow them no more ;  
 My course here bounded, as each artist's is,  
 When it doth touch the limit of his skill."

—*Par.* xxx. 16.

At last they have reached the supreme height of beati-  
 tude and glory, the Empyrean :

"The heaven that is unbodied light;  
 Light intellectual, replete with love;  
 Love of true happiness, replete with joy;  
 Joy that transcends all sweetness of delight."

—*Par.* xxx. 40.

This is the Heaven of Heavens, the abode of God and of all the elect, beyond all limits of time and space, beyond all things material and corporeal. Suddenly streams of living radiance, the "*Lumen gloriæ*," descend upon the poet, strengthen him to bear the Beatific Vision, and make him, human though he be, like God Himself :

"As when the lightning, in a sudden spleen  
 Unfolded, dashes from the blinding eyes  
 The visive spirits, dazzled and bedimm'd,  
 So round about me fulminating streams  
 Of living radiance play'd, and left me swathed  
 And veil'd in dense impenetrable blaze.  
 Such weal is in the love that stills this heaven;  
 For its own flame the torch thus fitting ever.  
 No sooner to my listening ear had come  
 The brief assurance, than I understood  
 New virtue into me infused, and sight  
 Kindled afresh, with vigour to sustain  
 Excess of light however pure."—*Par.* xxx. 47.

Thus begins<sup>1</sup> the beatific vision, union beatified, of man's soul with God. Gradually the Divine Being is revealed to him, first under the figure of a stream of light,<sup>2</sup> flowing in wondrous effulgence between banks enamelled with flowers, which are the transfigured souls of the blessed :

<sup>1</sup> The poetic action, it will be observed, requires a supposed progress in the attainment of the Beatific Vision. Only partially manifested through glory reflected in the nine spheres of saints and angels, it is more fully disclosed in the Empyrean, yet more so in the mystic Rose, where God is beheld as Creator through the Word ; finally, the Divine Essence, the Ever-Blessed Trinity, and the Incarnate Word in their Midst, open to sight.

<sup>2</sup> In allusion to Pa. xlv. 5, xxxv. 9, 10 (Dan vii. 10 : "A swift stream of fire issued forth from before Him") ; Apoc. xxii. 1.

"Banks, on either side, painted with spring,  
 Incredible how fair; and from the tide  
 There ever and anon, outstarting, flew  
 Sparkles instinct with life; and in the flowers  
 Did set them, like to rubies chased in gold:  
 Then, as if drunk with odours, plunged again  
 Into the wondrous flood."—*Par.* xxx. 63.

The sparkles are the angels, now ascending to God, now descending to the blessed. Beatrice tells Dante that before his thirst to see God, face to face, can be satisfied he must drink of the River of Life; what he has seen are but images of the Divine Essence:

"This stream, and these forth issuing from its gulf  
 And diving back, a living topaz each,  
 With all this laughter on its bloomy shores,  
 Are but a preface, shadowy of the truth  
 They emblem: not that in themselves the things  
 Are crude; but on thy part is the defect,  
 For that thy views not yet aspire so high."

—*Par.* xxx. 77.

His eyes are bathed in that stream of light, and gradually made fit to see God. Suddenly type and figure vanish, and the two courts of Heaven—angels and men—are revealed in all their splendour. The stream swells into a vast ocean of light, whilst circling all around, filling every part, and reflected in the crystal surface, are the countless multitudes of the redeemed, who form the petals of the mystic rose.<sup>1</sup> The rose itself is illumined by the beams of

<sup>1</sup> The everlasting Rose of yellow hue, which in bright expansiveness

"Lays forth its gradual blooming, redolent  
 Of praises to the never wintering sun."—*Par.* xxx. 124.

is drawn from the golden Rose. The "Rose Aurea," which is of pure gold inwrought with rubies and other gems, is solemnly blessed by the Pope on *Letare*, Mid-Lent Sunday, as an emblem of Christ Who is "the flower of the field and the Lily of the Valley, and as a sign of the joy of the Church triumphant and militant in Him." The Rose is sent to

divine light which descend upon and within it, and again stream forth to the uttermost horizon of the crystalline Heaven, energising it with life and power. God in His relation to the world, which He created in and through His Son, is here the sole object of the poet's contemplation. The natural law by which we see near objects most clearly holds no more. At one glance Dante surveys the whole circumference of the mystic rose, even to its outermost petals :

"O prime Enlightener! Thou who gavest me strength  
On the high triumph of thy realm to gaze;  
Grant virtue now to utter what I kenn'd.  
There is in heaven a light, whose goodly shine  
Makes the Creator visible to all  
Created, that in seeing Him alone  
Have peace;<sup>1</sup> and in a circle spreads so far,  
That the circumference were too loose a zone  
To girdle in the sun. All is one beam

---

Catholic sovereigns, states, or cities, as a pledge of Christian joy and hope of Heaven. Henry VI., Henry VIII. and Queen Mary his daughter, are among the crowned heads who have received it.

<sup>1</sup> The light, *lumen glorie*, by which God is manifested to the blessed in Heaven, is an emanation from that light in which God beholds Himself. Its effect is supernaturally to elevate and strengthen the soul, and to render it, in a certain sense, deiform. For the soul is united in a certain ineffable manner to God Himself, through "the divine essence becoming the intelligible form of the intellect." Cf. Thom. *Cont. Gent.* ii. 53. The light of glory makes the soul capable of this union, for it could not attain to an act so sublime without being supernaturally disposed thereto. And since the visual faculties of the soul are increased by this operation, it is called Light. Cf. *Summ.* i. q. 12, a. 5. See Apoc. xxi. 23: "The glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the Lamp thereof." Cf. Heb. i. 3: "Who being the brightness of His glory, and the figure of His substance, upholds all things by the word of His power." John i. 3: "All things were made by Him"

"The Son being the Eternal Wisdom, is spoken of as the primal type (*principium exemplare*) of creation, of whom the Apostle says, "In Him were all things created" (Col. i. 16); S. i. q. 45, a. 6. Adoption is appropriated to the Son as the type (of all other adopted sons), and to the Holy Ghost as impressing on us the likeness of this type." S. iii. q. 23, a. 3.

Reflected from the summit of the first  
 That moves, which being hence and vigour takes;  
 And as some cliff, that from the bottom eyes  
 His image mirror'd in the crystal flood,  
 As if to admire his brave apparelling  
 Of verdure and of flowers; so round about,  
 Eying the light, on more than million thrones,  
 Stood, eminent, whatever from the earth  
 Has to the skies return'd. How wide the leaves,  
 Extended to their utmost, of this rose,  
 Whose lowest step embosoms such a space  
 Of ample radiance! Yet, nor amplitude  
 Nor height impeded, but my view with ease  
 Took in the full dimensions of that joy.  
 Near or remote, what there avails, where God  
 Immediate rules, and Nature, awed, suspends  
 Her sway?"—*Par.* xxx. 97.

Beatrice leads the poet into the midst of the rose; between its petals and the Divine Light float angels, ascending and descending. From hence he contemplates the vast company of the redeemed. Upon a still vacant throne lies a crown destined for the Emperor Henry VII., who entered the unseen world before the poet.

Dante's growing amazement at the glorious vision before him is compared to the mute wonder of the barbarians, as they marched into imperial Rome:

"I, who then  
 From human to divine had pass'd, from time  
 Unto eternity, and out of Florence  
 To justice and to truth, how might I choose  
 But marvel too? Twixt gladness and amaze,  
 In sooth, no will had I to utter aught,  
 Or hear. And, as a pilgrim, when he rests  
 Within the temple of his vow, looks round  
 In breathless awe, and hopes some time to tell  
 Of all its goodly state; e'en so mine eyes  
 Coursed up and down along the living light,  
 Now low, and now aloft, and now around,

Visiting every step. Looks I beheld  
 Where Charity in soft persuasion sat;  
 Smiles from within, and radiance from above;  
 And in each gesture, grace and honour high."

—*Par.* xxxi. 33.

The poet turns to question Beatrice, but she has vanished, and in her place by his side stands an old man :

"Robed, as the rest, in glory. Joy benign  
 Glow'd in his eye, and o'er his cheek diffused,  
 With gestures such as spake a father's love."

—*Par.* xxxi. 56.

He is St. Bernard, the type of the contemplative life, the inspired panegyrist of our Blessed Lady, "her own faithful Bernard."<sup>1</sup> The mission of Beatrice is fulfilled, and she resumes her place in the third circle of the heavenly rose. Dante recognises her clearly as she sits exalted high above him, on the throne where her merit hath placed her, her brow crowned with a wreath illumined by the eternal beams. Once again he addresses her :

"Thy liberal bounty still toward me keep :  
 That when my spirit, which thou madest whole,  
 Is loosen'd from this body, it may find  
 Favour with thee."—*Par.* xxxi. 78.

And once again :

"She, so distant, as appear'd, look'd down  
 And smiled."—*Par.* xxxi. 82.

Henceforth Dante is committed to the guidance of St. Bernard, who points out to him the thrones of the blessed, and in a prayer<sup>2</sup> of exquisite beauty implores Mary to obtain for his charge the fulness of the Beatific Vision. At the Saint's command, Dante raises his eyes to the loftiest of the celestial spheres. There, enthroned in

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* xxxi. 93.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.* xxxiii. 1.



majesty, he beholds Mary, "the Queen that of this realm is sovran."<sup>1</sup> Around her throne the heavens are irradiated with surpassing splendour, and thousands of angels minister to her :

"At their glee  
And carol, smiled the Lovely One of Heaven,  
And joy was in the eyes of all the blest."

—*Par.* xxxi. 123.

Beneath our Lady's feet sits Eve, she "who opened first the wound which Mary healed." Rachel is placed below Eve ; near her, Beatrice. On the descending steps are seated the ancestresses of Christ, Sara, Rebecca, Judith, Ruth. Below the sea of light which forms the calix of the mystic rose are placed St. John Baptist, St. Francis, St. Benedict, and others in due gradation. By these two lines the rose is divided into two parts, occupied respectively by those who believed in Christ before and after His Advent, the number of the latter being, of course, incomplete. St. Augustine, the founder of scientific theology in the West, St. Francis, the representative of the religious life, St. Benedict, the founder of the Benedictine Order, so rich in preachers of the faith, are here ; for they bore Christ spiritually, as the line of Hebrew women bore Him in the flesh. To the left of Mary is seated Adam, father of the Old Covenant ; to her right, St. Peter, the father and rock upon whom is founded the Church of the New Covenant. Next to Adam is Moses, who foretold the destinies of the Church of the Old Covenant. Near St. Peter is St. John, the seer of Patmos and the prophet of the New Covenant. To the right of St. John Baptist is St. Anne (grace), mother of the Blessed Virgin ; to his left, facing Adam, is St. Lucy (illuminative grace). In the centre of the mystic rose, the souls of baptized infants surround the sea of light :

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* xxxi. 108.

“Freely the sage,<sup>1</sup> though wrapt in musings high,  
Assumed the teacher’s part, and mild began :  
‘The wound that Mary closed, she opened first  
Who sits so beautiful at Mary’s feet.  
The third in order, underneath her, lo !  
Rachel with Beatrice ; Sarah next ;  
Judith, Rebeca, and the gleaner-maid,  
Meek ancestress of him who sang the songs  
Of sore repentance in his sorrowful mood.  
All, as I name them, down from leaf to leaf.  
Are, in gradation, throned on the rose,  
And from the seventh step, successively,  
Adown the breathing tresses of the flower,  
Still doth the file of Hebrew dames proceed.  
For these are a partition wall, whereby  
The sacred stairs are sever’d, as the faith  
In Christ divides them. On this part, where blooms  
Each leaf in full maturity, are set  
Such as in Christ, or e’er He came, believed.  
On the other, where an intersected space  
Yet shows the semicircle void, abide  
All they, who look’d to Christ already come.  
And as our Lady on her glorious stool,  
And they who on their stools beneath her sit,  
This way distinction make ; e’en so on his,  
The mighty Baptist that way marks the line,  
(He who endured the desert, and the pains  
Of martyrdom, and, for two years, of Hell<sup>2</sup>  
Yet still continued holy), and beneath,  
Augustin, Francis, Benedict, and the rest,  
Thus far from round to round. So Heaven’s decree  
Forecasts, this garden equally to fill  
With faith in either view, past or to come  
Learn too, that downward from the step which cleaves,  
Midway, the twain compartments, none there are  
Who place obtain for merit of their own,  
But have through other’s merit been advanced,

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<sup>1</sup> St. Bernard.

<sup>2</sup> Of Hades ; for St. John Baptist was beheaded before the second year of our Lord’s public life. Matt. xiv. 1-13 ; John vi. 4.

On set conditions; spirits all released,  
 Ere for themselves they had the power to chuse.  
 And if thou mark and listen to them all,  
 Their childish looks and voice declare as much."

—*Par.* xxxii. 1.

God has assigned the seats of the blessed according to the wise purposes of divine predestination :

"From this realm  
 Excluded, chance no entrance here may find,  
 No more than hunger, thirst, or sorrow can.  
 A law immutable hath stablish'd all ;  
 Nor is there aught thou seest, that doth not fit  
 Exactly, as the finger to the ring."—*Par.* xxxii. 44.

St. Bernard bids Dante raise his eyes to Mary, "the face that most resembles Christ,"<sup>1</sup> and so become capable of beholding Christ Himself. On poised wing, the Archangel Gabriel salutes Mary with the "Ave Maria, gratia plena :"<sup>2</sup>

"To whose sweet anthem all the blissful court,  
 From all parts answering, rang, that holier joy  
 Brooded the deep serene."—*Par.* xxxii. 86.

St. Bernard now invites the poet to join heart and soul with him in imploring Mary's aid and pity. The prayer is granted :

"The eyes, that Heaven with love and awe regards,  
 Fix'd on the suitor, witness'd, how benign  
 She looks on pious prayers : then fasten'd they  
 On the everlasting light, wherein no eye  
 Of creature, as well may be thought, so far  
 Can travel inward."—*Par.* xxxiii. 39.

The poet is approaching the final limit where all wishes end. As he gazes into the depths of everlasting light :

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* xxxii. 75.

<sup>2</sup> "Hail, full of grace ! blessed art thou among women."—*Luke* i. 28.

"Beckoning, smiled the sage  
That I should look aloft: but ere he bade,  
Already of myself aloft I look'd;  
For visual strength, refining more and more,  
Bare me into the ray authentic  
Of sovran light."<sup>1</sup>—*Par.* xxxiii. 47.

Who can describe the glories of that vision! As one who awakens from sleep retains but a faint impression of his dream, "all the vision dies, as it were, away; and yet the sense of sweet, that sprang from it"<sup>2</sup> remains for ever imprinted on the memory. Transfigured by this glory, his union with God is now consummated, and he is empowered to gaze upon His infinite and transcendent majesty, to behold God, in God Himself. In that depth he sees, "in one volume clasped of love, whate'er the universe unfolds" of His divine attributes; "yet one individual light the whole."<sup>3</sup> In the mystery of the Ever-blessed Trinity he knows God, not merely as He is revealed in creation, but as He is in Himself. And this vision, glorious beyond expression, is the source and end of all his bliss:

"My tongue shall utter now, no more  
E'en what remembrance keeps, than could the babe's,  
That yet is moisten'd at his mother's breast."

—*Par.* xxxiii. 100.

Not that the heavenly vision can undergo any change, but that his powers of sight thus illuminated, all has been changed in himself by this one look. Within the unfathomable abyss of divine light he sees three orbs of varying hues, yet equal in circumference: the Father, self-existent; the Son, sole-begotten of the Father; the Holy

<sup>1</sup> God is not merely cognisant of all truth, but He is Himself the Truth, and the fountain of all truth; therefore through Him all truth is true. Cf. S. i. q. 16, a. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.* xxxiii. 58.

<sup>3</sup> Thom. l. c. i. q. 4, a. 12.

Ghost, from both proceeding. In vain the poet tries to find words adequate to express these sublime mysteries :

"O speech!  
How feeble and how faint art thou, to give  
Conception birth! Yet this to what I saw  
Is less than little. O Eternal Light!  
Sole in Thyself that dwell'st, and of Thyself  
Sole understood, past, present, or to come."

—*Par.* xxxiii. 112.

Within the second orb of light he discerns the form of man, the human nature of the Divine Word, illumined by its own proper light, that is, by the effulgence of the God-head :

"Therein, . . . . in its own hue  
Beheld our image painted."—*Par.* xxxiii. 120.

Still he is unable to comprehend the mystery, until it is suddenly revealed to him as by a lightning flash. And now that his intellect, his desires, and will, are perfected in union with God, all his yearnings are still, all his longings satisfied :<sup>1</sup>

"E'en such was I, intent to scan  
The novel wonder, and trace out the form,  
How to the circle fitted, and therein  
How placed: but the flight was not for my wing;  
Had not a flash darted athwart my mind,  
And, in the spleen, unfolded what it sought.

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<sup>1</sup> As the *Purgatorio* typifies man's cleansing from sin and his striving after the freedom of the sons of God, so the *Paradiso* symbolises the final end of man and of all true Christian mysticism, his perfect union with God in knowledge and in love, termed by the early Fathers *ὁμοiosis προς Θεόν, μετόχη της Θεως εὐλαμπείας, θέωσις*. Cf. (Pseudo) Dionys. *De Ecclesiast. Hierarch.* i. 3; Cyrill. Alex. in *Joan.* viii. 47; Basil. *Ep.* 141; *De Spir. Sanct.* c. 9, 13; Joan. Damasc. *De Fid. Orthodox.* ii. 12. Tauler in his sermon for the Third Sunday after Easter says, "Man becomes like the form of God, is godlike and godly." See St. Bernard, *Serm.* 85, 71, 4, in *Cantic. de Dilig. Deo*, cap. iv., on the nature of this mystical union of the soul with God.

Here vigour fail'd the towering fantasy :  
But yet the will roll'd onward, like a wheel<sup>1</sup>  
In even motion, by the love impell'd,  
That moves the sun in Heaven and all the stars."

—*Par.* xxxiii. 126

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<sup>1</sup> The simile of the wheel has a deep significance. As a wheel in turning touches the ground at every point in its circumference, so now in the poet the harmony is complete between desire and possession, mind and heart, soul and body.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE THEOLOGY OF THE "COMMEDIA."

DANTE's residence in Paris coincided with the most flourishing period of Scholasticism. After the death of St. Thomas in 1274, his fame, greater only as a saint than as a theologian, continued to attract new and ardent followers. Dante, his contemporary and disciple, naturally shared the general veneration for his memory, and anticipated the judgment of the Church by giving "the good brother Thomas"<sup>1</sup> a place in Paradise. But that was not enough. St. Thomas had opened for him the deep mysteries of theology, and by St. Thomas, therefore, he is introduced to the circle of doctors who surround the Saint and his master, Albertus Magnus, in Paradise.<sup>2</sup> In all disputed questions the poet follows St. Thomas; as, for instance, in the substantial unity of man, truth as the supreme object of the created intellect, the genesis of our knowledge proceeding from the perceptions of our senses, and more especially in regard to the essence of beatitude. Nor does he disdain to borrow some of his illustrations.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the writings of St. Thomas might well furnish a commentary on the *Divina Commedia*, and we can form no correct notion of the poem, far less understand its deeper significance, without some knowledge of his theology.

At the same time, St. Thomas was not Dante's only

<sup>1</sup> "Il buon Fra Tommaso."—*Conv.* iv. 30.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.* x. 98.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* iv. 1.

teacher, and by his side in the same celestial sphere he beholds St. Bonaventure :

"From Bagnoregio one, who, in discharge  
Of my great offices, still laid aside  
All sinister aim."—*Par.* xii. 119.

St. Bonaventure points out to him another group of saintly doctors, and amongst them, and with a special purpose, Richard of St. Victor ; for St. Bonaventure, who also died in 1274, was the St. Thomas of the Mystics. Not that he contributed anything essentially new ; but just as the genius of St. Thomas secured the triumph of Scholasticism, so the clearness and power of thought, the depth and warmth of feeling, which characterise the writings of the great Cardinal, completed and elevated the labours of the Mystics, Richard and Hugh of St. Victor.

In the midst of the Empyrean radiance Dante sees a venerable patriarch :

"I saw instead a senior at my side,  
Robed, as the rest, in glory. Joy benign  
Glow'd in his eye, and o'er his cheek diffused,  
With gestures such as spake a father's love."  
—*Par.* xxxi. 55.

This is St. Bernard, who finally replaces Beatrice, and conducts the poet to his last goal, the vision of God. St. Bernard symbolises that supreme love which unites the loving soul with God :

"So gazed I then,  
Adoring ; for the charity of him  
Who, musing, in this world that peace enjoy'd,  
Stood livelily before me."—*Par.* xxxi. 100.

In the West, St. Bernard was, after St. Augustine, the founder of Christian Mysticism. Dante had sat at the feet of both Mystics and Schoolmen, and his poem bears



their twofold impress. In the schools he had learnt how from revealed sources to construct propositions of faith, and from these, as premises divinely true, to deduct further conclusions; how also to defend them against erroneous doctrines, and to illustrate and corroborate them by means of the natural sciences.<sup>1</sup> While Scholasticism then introduced him to the science of theology by means of dialectics, Mysticism unlocked for him the sanctuary of contemplation, a supernatural elevation of the soul, wherein it learns by actual experience its kinship with the spiritual world. And just as in the Church true Scholasticism and contemplation have always advanced hand in hand, Scholasticism<sup>2</sup> containing the elements of Mysticism, and the great mystics, notably those of St. Victor and St. Bonaventure, being proficient scholastics, so also in Dante are united the two systems by which the soul draws near to God. To the Scholastics he owes that precision and accuracy of statement which amazes theologians; to the Mystics that warmth and depth of insight which lends an ever-recurring charm to his pages. In his letter to Can Grande, he tells us that he drew his description of the ecstatic state and of supernatural contemplation from St. Paul, St. Matthew, Ezechias, Richard of St. Victor (*De Contemplatione*), St. Bernard (*De Consideratione*), St. Augustine, Plato,

<sup>1</sup> "The proper office of scholastic theology . . . is first to bring to light whatever may be contained hidden in Sacred Scripture and apostolic traditions. For the theologian deduces conclusions from premises of faith revealed by God, and shows by appropriate reasoning how they are contained in the premises themselves. . . . Secondly, he has to defend the faith against heretics. . . . Lastly, to illustrate and corroborate the teaching of Christ and the Church, as far as is possible, from the human sciences."—*Milch. Canus. De Loc. Theolog.* viii. 2; S. i. q. 1, a. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. S. ii. 2, q. 171, where St. Thomas shows that prophecy consists first and principally of knowledge, Hugo of St. Victor (*De Anim.* iii.), and Richard of St. Victor (*Benjamin Major per tot.*) See also Erdman, *Scholastik, Mystik, und Dante—Jahrb. der Dante. Gesellschaft*, iii. p. 78, and Kleutgen, *Theologie der Vorzeit*, iv. p. 55.

St. Boethius. Thus it was in the schools of the religious that Dante was led to the love of "that glorious lady," which so inflamed him that it consumed every other thought.<sup>1</sup>

This, in brief, was the history of the mental training which enabled the poet to produce the *Commedia*, a work which is essentially theological. Theology is its subject, the source of the greater part of its ideas, and of its richest and most fruitful imagery. Its very title, *The Divina Commedia*, proclaims this fact. It is a visionary pilgrimage through the three kingdoms of the other world, from the dwelling of Lucifer to the throne of God, and theology is at the root of all that the poet encounters in his journey, whether of fear, sorrow, or joy. Philosophy, astronomy, politics, history, ancient mythology, and mediæval legend are all interwoven in his many-coloured web. One chief and fascinating element of interest in the poem is indeed that it presents to us, idealised, the whole culture of the mediæval Christian world, when it had attained its perfection and its epoch was to close. And it was theology again, which gave order and unity to this varied wealth of material; and Dante speaks but the truth when he calls his work,

"The sacred poem that hath made  
Both Heaven and earth copartners in its toil."

—*Par.* xxv. 1.

Contemporary witness to the theological merit of the poem is furnished in the first line of Dante's epitaph, which declares him "master of dogmatic lore." In 1350, within thirty years of his death, his picture was exposed in the Church of St. Stephen's, near the Ponte Vecchio, at Florence, and honoured with semi-religious reverence, and his poem was expounded there and in other churches.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* ii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> By a decree of August 9, 1373, the Florentine Republic established a chair for the public reading and exposition of the *Divina Commedia*.

The Vatican itself accords him rank as a theologian. In Raphael's "Disputa," the most thoughtful of all his creations, amongst popes, cardinals, bishops, Religious, fathers, and doctors of the Church, by the altar, where reposes the Most Holy, stands Dante with his laurel wreath. In truth, he anticipated the most pregnant developments of Catholic doctrine, mastered its subtlest distinctions, and treated its hardest problems with almost faultless accuracy. Were all the libraries in the world destroyed, and the Holy Scriptures with them, the whole Catholic system of doctrine and morals might be almost reconstructed out of the *Divina Commedia*.

The poem shows us theology in its organic evolution. Starting from simple and universal principles, with unerring logic and mighty power, Dante advances from truth to truth. From the gloomy forest, wherein the sinner had lost his way and become estranged from God, the theological thought soars higher and higher through Purgatory and Paradise, till, in the concluding cantos, the poet beholds God and all things in Him : " <sup>1</sup>

" O grace, unenvying of thy boon ! that gavest  
 Boldness to fix so earnestly my ken  
 On the everlasting splendour, that I look'd  
 While sight was unconsumed ; and in that depth,  
 Saw in one volume clasp'd of love, what'er  
 The universe unfolds ; all properties  
 Of substance and of accident, beheld  
 Compounded, yet one individual light

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The chair was held by Boccaccio, Philippo Villani, Fedelfo and Laudino. As St. Stephen's became too small for the audience, the lectures were transferred to the Duomo.

<sup>1</sup> "There is nothing to forbid our saying, that after the day of judgment, when the glory of men and angels shall be wholly consummated, the blessed will know all things that God knows by the science of vision."—S. Supp. q. 92, a. 3. (That is, all created things, but not all things possible, for such a knowledge implies comprehension of God, and therefore equality with Him. S. i q. 12, a. 8.)

The whole. And of such bond methinks I saw  
 The universal form; for that whene'er  
 I do but speak of it, my soul dilates  
 Beyond her proper self."—*Par.* xxxiii. 77.

In the theology of the *Divina Commedia* we must distinguish its matter, method, and form. Its matter is the theology of the Catholic Church, as contained in writings and tradition. Its method is that of the thirteenth century, consequently the scholastic, and more especially the system of St. Thomas. Its form is that of a poem stored with Christian, mythological, and historical imagery; but, in the main, the poet's own creation. Dante's theology is the expression of Catholic doctrine. His method is the product of the teaching of the schools, and the working of his own intellect under the influence of faith. His poetry is the offspring of his own imagination. In the first connection he is bound by the rule of faith; in the second, he depends on the tradition of the schools; in the third alone, the figures and scenery of the invisible world are his own free conception, and this last is truly all his own. But in the *Divina Commedia* the matter, the method, and the poetical form are so wondrously interwoven, that we cannot tell, whether its hold on us proceeds from the majesty of the thoughts, the force and delicacy of its arguments, or the exquisite poetry which lends such a grace even to the dry, and, to the uninitiated, repellant discussions of the schools. It is this marvellous union of faith, science, and poetry which makes the *Divina Commedia* unique.

But the root of its supremacy lies deeper even than this. God is, according to Plato, essential truth, and consequently essential or absolute beauty.<sup>1</sup> The beauty of all things, therefore, is only the reflection of and participation in that eternal, unchangeable loveliness which is

<sup>1</sup> *Sympos.* p. 211, 181; *Phileb.* p. 51; *Phaed.* p. 78.

{ God Himself;<sup>1</sup> and wherever beauty is, there are order, measure, and harmony:<sup>2</sup>

"Among themselves all things  
Have order; and from hence the form, which makes  
The universe resemble God."—*Par. i.* 100.

{ This order is the subject of the *Divina Commedia*; the harmony between the divine and the human, the uncreated and the created, the supernatural and the natural order, between faith and reason, grace and free-will, Church and State, the Papacy and the Empire, God and the world, time and eternity; all these things in their fullest extent and in their perfect unity the poet comprehends at a glance, and all, even the least, are set forth transfigured by the divine eternal light, and shining with supernatural beauty.

It is in the same eternal light that Dante views the purpose of philosophy in its relation towards theology; for philosophy is "a loving use of that wisdom, the principle of which is in God. Therefore philosophy in its essence is divine, and perfectly united as in everlasting wedlock with the divinity, but in other intelligences lesser-wise."<sup>3</sup> Philosophy is not only the spouse, but also the most beautiful and honourable daughter of the Emperor of the universe.<sup>4</sup> Thus, in accordance with the practice of St. Thomas and the schoolmen, and with its own aim and purpose, Dante discusses philosophical questions in close connection with theology. For philosophy "is an aid to our faith, which to the human race is the most important of all things, since by it we escape death and attain to eternal life."<sup>5</sup>

Dante has told us himself the sources from which he drew

<sup>1</sup> *Sympos. loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> *Tim.* p. 87; *Philob.* p. 64; *Sympos.* p. 211.

<sup>3</sup> *Conv.* iii. 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Conv.* ii. 13-16. Hugh of St. Victor calls God, *Imperator Mundi* (*De Arca Noe*, i. 1).

<sup>5</sup> *Conv.* iii. 7.

his philosophy. He relates how in his anguish, after the death of Beatrice, "I set myself to read that book, not known to many, of Boethius, wherein he, captive and down-fallen, had consoled himself. And hearing also that Tullius had written another book, wherein, treating of friendship, he had inserted some words of consolation for an excellent man named Lælius concerning the death of his friend Scipio, I set myself to read that. And though it was hard to me at first to understand their purport, at length I mastered it, as far as my knowledge of the grammar and my limited understanding permitted, through which understanding I had already seen many things as in a dream, as the *Vita Nuova* shows."<sup>1</sup> In both these authors philosophy wears the robes of rhetoric and poetry, as it does in Dante, though bearing also the stamp of his own genius. From the frequent quotations in the *Convito*, it is evident that he had a special predilection for Virgil's *Æneid*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the *Ars Poetica* of Horace, and Lucan's *Pharsalia*. From the *Æneid* he borrowed the idea of the divine purpose in the foundation of Rome; from the *Pharsalia* the legend of the origin of the Empire; from the *Metamorphoses* symbols of deeper mysteries. He thus sought a hidden meaning in every utterance of the ancient world, and bound it by close spiritual ties to the Christian order.

In philosophy, in the stricter sense, his chief master was Aristotle, though only in a Latin translation. In Limbo he

"Spied the master of the sapient throng,  
Seated amid the philosophic train.  
Him all admire, all pay him reverence due"

—*Hell*. iv. 128.

Next to him he beholds Socrates and Plato, whose *Timæus* he knew in a Latin version, together with those

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* ii. 13.

specie of universality  
over all human  
theological thought and life

portions of his writings which are quoted by Aristotle, the Fathers, and the later Jewish and Arabian commentators. In some cases he prefers Aristotle's view to Plato's; as, for example, with regard to the earth, which Aristotle held to be stationary, but which, according to Plato, revolved slowly on its axis.<sup>1</sup> For he considers that Nature had revealed her secrets<sup>2</sup> to this "Prince of reasoners"<sup>3</sup> more than to any other human being. Nevertheless, in his enumeration of the heavenly spheres he follows Ptolemy, and not Aristotle. Sometimes also he endeavours to harmonise Plato's view with that of Aristotle; as, for instance, in the question whether the life of pure intelligences is one of action, or only of contemplation.<sup>4</sup> As regards moral philosophy, he sees no opposition between Plato and Aristotle, but only the difference between adolescence and maturity. "Aristotle," he says, "by means of that almost divine intellect with which nature had endowed him, brought moral philosophy to perfection. Hence the name of Academicians was given up, and all who belonged to this school are called Peripatetics, and now claim the sovereignty of the world."<sup>5</sup>

But it was through St. Thomas, again, that Dante knew and interpreted Aristotle. As in the Heaven of the sun St. Thomas appears surrounded by Albertus Magnus, Peter Lombard, Boethius, Dionysius the Areopagite, Richard of St. Victor, Isidore, Bede, Gratian, and, closest of all, St. Bonaventure, so in Limbo, Aristotle is the central figure of a group of philosophers—Socrates, Plato, Democritus, Empedocles, Diogenes, Thales, Anaxagoras, Heraclitus, Zeno, Cicero, Seneca, Avicenna, and Averroes. Although, with St. Thomas, Dante rejects Averroes' doctrine of emanation, the eternity of the world, and the universal mind, yet,

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* iii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> *Conv.* iv. 2: "Maestro della umana ragione."

<sup>4</sup> *Conv.* iv. 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Conv.* iv. 6.

on account of his historical importance as a commentator of Aristotle, he places him in Limbo with the descriptive epithet, "He who made that commentary vast, Averroes."<sup>1</sup> The Christian world had judged him sternly. Traini's well-known picture, painted in 1340, in Santa Caterina at Pisa, represents St. Thomas as hurling Averroes to the ground, and there is a similar one in Santa Maria Novella at Florence. The Synod of Paris in 1209, the Papal Legate, Robert de Courçon, in 1215, and Gregory IX. in his letter to the University of Paris in 1231, had pointed out the danger of the Arabian pseudo-Aristotelian philosophy. St. Thomas, however, was the first to refute Averroes scientifically, while he at the same time reproduced the real teaching of Aristotle, and interpreted it by the light of Christianity.

We have already remarked that Dante's first notions of philosophy were derived from Boethius and Cicero, and therefore through the medium of poetry and rhetoric. He was thus led to treat philosophical and theological subjects under images and symbols. The poet Virgil is for him the type of philosophy, of human science and the natural virtues. In Hell, as in Purgatory, Virgil discusses with the poet a variety of philosophical questions, both physical and moral; as for instance, the distinctions in sins, moral freedom, the human soul and its powers, its relation to the body, the centre of the world. When Dante asks him whether and why prayer frees us from divine chastisements, Virgil answers him, but as the question is theological as well as philosophical, he adds :

"Yet in this deep suspicion rest thou not  
Contented, unless she assure thee so,  
Who betwixt truth and mind infuses light."

—*Purg.* vi. 44.

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<sup>1</sup> *Hell*, iv. 141.



Virgil represents the seven natural virtues ; three of the intellect, four of the will—prudence, temperance, justice, fortitude ; counsel, knowledge, wisdom ; but the three divine virtues, faith, hope, and charity, are wanting. Consequently he and his fellows are detained in Limbo, in that "magnificent castle, seven times with lofty walls begirt,"<sup>1</sup> and can never enter Heaven :

"There I with those abide,  
Who the three holy virtues put not on,  
But understood the rest, and without blame  
Follow'd them all."—*Purg.* vii. 33.

In the second book of the *Convito*<sup>2</sup> Dante likens the different secular sciences to the movement of the nine heavens in the Ptolemaic system, and makes use of this comparison in assigning to them their relative position and value. The sciences of the Trivium and the Quadrivium correspond to the heavens of the seven inferior planets. Grammar is assigned to the moon, because, like the moon, it is always changing. Mercury, on account of his smallness, corresponds to Dialectics, whose proofs are contained in a small space ; Venus, to Rhetoric, from its attractiveness ; the Sun, to Arithmetic, as the primal light of all the sciences. Music belongs to Mars, because his heaven is the central one of the nine, and the foundation of music is harmony and measure. Geometry moves between the point and the circle as its beginning and end, like Jupiter between cold Mars and hot Saturn. Astronomy is represented by Saturn, the greatest of the planets and the slowest in his motion, because of the magnitudes with which it deals, and the long study it requires. The eighth heaven, that of the fixed stars, is the symbol of Physics and Metaphysics : the former treats of visible things which come into being and pass away, the latter of things invisible which begin but

<sup>1</sup> *Hell*, iv. 101.

<sup>2</sup> *Conv.* ii. 14.

never end. The pole which we see is the type of those tangible things with which Physics deal; the other pole, which is invisible, represents the immaterial and intangible things which belong to Metaphysics. The daily revolution of the heaven of the fixed stars, again, symbolises those natural corruptible things which are actually ephemeral; its slow and gradual movement from west to east, the evanescent nature of temporal things.

The last two comparisons of moral philosophy with the *primum mobile*, and of theology with the Empyrean, need further explanation. The *primum mobile*, or crystalline heaven, regulates by its motion the daily revolutions of all the others. So moral philosophy, as St. Thomas says, governs the study of the other sciences; for, according to Aristotle, justice regulates the sciences, and commands them to be taught and learnt. If, therefore, moral philosophy were annihilated, all the other sciences would be neglected. The motionless Empyrean represents theology, for theology alone gives peace complete, and puts to silence the strife of human opinions, arguments, and sophistries, by the absolute certainty of its subject—God Himself.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of this statement Dante again repeats, that it was the writings of Boethius and Cicero which first kindled his love for his most gracious mistress, Philosophy; and in explanation of the verse in his poem, "He guided mine eyes towards a lady," he remarks:<sup>2</sup> "It must be understood that this lady is Philosophy, which in truth is a

<sup>1</sup> "The speculative sciences take rank according to the certainty they offer, and the dignity of their subject-matter; and under both aspects this science (theology) is the first . . . with regard to certitude, the other sciences derive their certitude from the natural light of human reason, which is fallible; but this one obtains its certitude from the light of divine science, which cannot be deceived. As regards the subject-matter, this science treats principally of things so sublime as to transcend human reason, while the other sciences consider only that which is within its domain."—S. i. q. 1, a. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Conr.* iii. 15.

most gracious lady, adorned with nobility, admirable for knowledge, glorious for the spirit of liberty. . . . In her countenance are seen things which reveal the joys of Paradise, especially in her eyes and her smile. The eyes of this lady represent her demonstrations, wherein truth is beheld with certainty, and her smile typifies her persuasive arguments, in which the inner light of wisdom is seen as it were through a veil ; and in these two things we experience the highest joy and felicity. . . .<sup>1</sup> Therefore I declare and maintain that the mistress whom I loved next after my first love is that beautiful and most renowned daughter of the Emperor of the Universe, who was called by Pythagoras, Philosophy."

This description of philosophy would show what a deep impression the work of Boethius had produced on Dante's mind, even if we had not his express and grateful mention of it in the *Divina Commedia* :

"The saintly soul, that shows  
The world's deceitfulness to all who hear him,  
Is, with the sight of all the good that is,  
Blest there. The limbs, whence it was driven, lie  
Down in Cieldauro ; and from martyrdom  
And exile came it here."—*Par. x.* 120.

Boethius<sup>2</sup> also represented philosophy as a beautiful woman, of "majestic bearing, and with glowing eyes." After the loss of Beatrice, Dante devoted himself to her ;

<sup>1</sup> *Conv. ii.* 16.

<sup>2</sup> "While I reflected in silence on these things, and was duly recording my mournful complaint, there appeared from above a woman of majestic aspect, with eyes glowing, and penetrating beyond human power. Her complexion was fresh, and her vigour appeared so inexhaustible, that although she might have reached maturity, it was impossible to tell her age. Her height too was hard to decide."—*Boethius, Consolat. Philosoph. i.* 15. Our English King Alfred translated this book of Boethius and always carried it with him. The life of Boethius was written by Richard Graham Viscount Preston, French ambassador and secretary of State to James II., d. 1695. His cultus as a martyr was approved 1884 under the title of St. Severinus Boethius.

"for this lady is not only the most perfect of the human race, but something more; for God in His goodness has endowed her with superhuman excellence."<sup>1</sup> Dante makes her the type of wisdom in the widest sense, embracing all sciences, and including also theology, as we must infer from many passages in *Paradise*, in which he speaks of the eyes and smile of Beatrice.<sup>2</sup> It is through her that the just experience the bliss of Paradise.

Thus Wisdom is the subject-matter of philosophy, and a divine love of Wisdom is its form. The supreme unfailling delight that comes from the contemplation of Wisdom is the end. "Thus all may learn what my present mistress is, both her material, formal, and final causes, and her substance. Love is the form of philosophy, and is therefore called her soul; and it manifests itself in the exercise of wisdom, which brings with it marvellous delights, namely, contentment under all circumstances, and indifference to things which enthrall other men."<sup>3</sup>

Dante  
and  
Beatrice!

The relation of philosophy to theology appears from what has been said. The superiority of the latter rests on the supreme excellence of its object, which is God, and on the greater certainty of its knowledge, which is founded on divine revelation. Hence Beatrice, beholding God, beholds in Him the highest philosophy, which, imperfect in all other intelligences, in Him alone is perfect and true. When she turns her eyes upon the poet, her gaze raises him in a state of ecstasy from sphere to sphere.<sup>4</sup> Philosophy, however, ends in faith, for it recognises that the finite intellect cannot measure the infinite:

"He (it began),  
Who turn'd His compass on the worlds extreme,  
And in that space so variously hath wrought,  
Both openly and in secret; in such wise

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* iii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.* xviii. 8, 51.

<sup>3</sup> *Conv.* iii. 11-13.

<sup>4</sup> *Par.* i. 73.

Could not, through all the universe, display  
 Impression of His glory, that the Word  
 Of His omniscience should not still remain  
 In infinite excess.<sup>1</sup> In proof whereof,  
 He first through pride supplanted, who was sum  
 Of each created being, waited not  
 For light celestial ; so abortive fell.  
 Whence needs each lesser nature is but scant  
 Receptacle into that Good, which knows  
 No limit, measured by itself alone.  
 Therefore your sight, of the Omnipresent Mind  
 A single beam, its origin must own  
 Surpassing far its utmost potency.<sup>2</sup>  
 The ken, your world is gifted with, descends  
 In the everlasting Justice as low down,

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<sup>1</sup> [Dante, here following St. Thomas, refutes the optimist error of Abelard, who held that as God's omnipotence is predetermined by His wisdom and justice, and His wisdom and justice have predetermined this world and no other, He could not have made another or a better world than this. To this St. Thomas replies, that though it be true God's power is ever ordered according to His wisdom, and the Divine Wisdom comprehends the whole range of His power, yet the order of this world from which our idea of justice is drawn, does not so exhaust the Divine Wisdom that it could produce nothing else. "For the whole idea of the order which the wisdom of God impresses on His creatures must be judged by the end He has in view. When the end is proportioned to the things made for that end, the wisdom of the Maker is limited to a determined order. But the Divine Goodness (which is the end of creation) exceeds beyond proportion every created thing. Hence the Divine Wisdom is not so determined to any one order of things, but that it could create another." God, then, could create another world, better than this one, but could not create another world better adapted for that end, for which this one has been made, i.e., the particular display of His goodness, manifested in this creation. In other words, God is free as to the end, but that end once chosen, He is constrained by His wisdom to adopt the best means for attaining it. St. Thomas, however, names three created things which are as perfect as can be—"the Sacred Humanity, because of its union with God ; created beatitude, since it is the enjoyment of God ; and the Blessed Virgin, because she is the Mother of God. All three have a certain infinite dignity from God, who is the Infinite Good, and under this aspect no creatures could be made more perfect than they are, for nothing is better than God."—Cf. S. i. q. 25, a. 5, 6.]

<sup>2</sup> "The intellectual faculty in the creature is called an intelligible light, because derived, so to say, from the primal light. . . . To see

As eye doth in the sea ; which, though it mark  
The bottom from the shore, in the wide main  
Discerns it not ; and ne'ertheless it is,  
But hidden through its deepness."—*Par.* xix. 37.

Consequently in the mysteries of the faith we cannot comprehend the "wherefore"<sup>1</sup> or inward cause, but only the fact or statement :

"Seek not the wherefore,<sup>2</sup> race of human kind !  
Could ye have seen the whole, no need had been  
For Mary to bring forth."—*Purg.* iii. 35.

Even when Beatrice sees all things in God as in a mirror, God Himself cannot be fully comprehended :

"That will I see  
In Him, Who is truth's mirror ; and Himself  
Parhelion unto all things, and nought else,  
To Him."—*Par.* xxvi. 105.

Our errors about sensible things show how short is the flight of reason.<sup>3</sup> Distant as earth from heaven is human knowledge from divine truth, what is known to God and taught by the faith :

"To the end  
That thou mayst know, (she answered straight,) the school

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God requires some sort of similitude in the visual faculty, whereby the intellect may become capable of seeing Him. But with regard to the object seen, which must be in some manner united to the seer, by no created resemblance can the divine essence be seen. . . . Much less, therefore, can the essence of God be seen through any created species. To say, then, that we see God through any resemblance, is to say that the divine essence itself is not seen."—*S.* i. q. 12, a. 2.

<sup>1</sup> Mere experience tells us that a thing is ; science, the wherefore or inward cause.—*Aris. Meta.* i. 1, 15.

<sup>2</sup> "To those who accept authority, we should not endeavour to prove matters of faith except by authority ; with others we defend the faith sufficiently, by showing that it contains nothing impossible."—*S.* i. q. 32, a. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Par.* ii. 56.

{ That thou hast follow'd ; and how far behind,  
 { When following my discourse, its learning halts ;  
 { And mayst behold your art, from the divine  
 { As distant, as the disagreement is<sup>1</sup>  
 { "Twixt earth and heaven's most high and rapturous orb."  
 { —*Purg.* xxxiii. 83.

Hence man must not criticise the truths of faith ; it is enough for him that God has spoken :

"The flood (I answer'd) from the spirit of God  
 Rain'd down upon the ancient bond and new,—  
 Here is the reasoning that convinceth me  
 So feelingly, each argument beside  
 Seems blunt and forceless, in comparison."  
 —*Par.* xxiv. 90.

"Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not,"<sup>2</sup> from which Theology draws her inferences :

"Faith of things hoped<sup>3</sup> is substance, and the proof  
 Of things not seen ; and herein doth consist,  
 Methinks, its essence.

. . . . .

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<sup>1</sup> Nor does Beatrice here censure Scholasticism as opposed to faith, in order to convert Dante to mysticism ; she is only expressing the infinite disproportion that exists, between all human knowledge and the truth as it is in God. When in *Purg.* xxx. 132 she reproaches her pupil for turning his steps into deceitful ways, "following false images of good, that make no promise perfect," she is alluding to the political cares and distractions, which diverted his mind from the contemplation of the highest good. True philosophy indeed leads its faithful followers to contemn all else (*Conv.* iii. 14). Cf. Plato, *Theæt.* 173 c: "The veritable philosopher is ignorant from his youth up of the way to the market-place, he knows not the site of the senate-hall, nor the courts of justice, nor any places of public resort."

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xi. 1.

<sup>3</sup> "Faith is said to be the substance of things hoped for, because the things, that we should hope for, begin to be in us first by the assent of faith, which virtually contains the whole object of our hope. . . . As argument leads the intellect to adhere to that which is true, the firm adhesion of the intellect to the unseen truths of faith is here called argument."—S. ii. 2. q. 4, a. 1.

And inasmuch as we must needs infer<sup>1</sup>  
 From such belief our reasoning, all respect  
 To other view excluded; hence of proof  
 The intention is derived."—*Par.* xxiv. 65, 75.

Consequently faith is only above, not contrary to reason, so that when we attain to the vision of God, we shall see the truths of faith as clearly and evidently, as we now do the axioms of reason :

"There will be seen  
 That, which we hold through faith; not shown by proof,  
 But in itself intelligibly plain,  
 E'en as the truth that man at first believes."

—*Par.* ii. 43.

As all the relations of numbers are contained in and derived from the unit, so the blessed, in beholding God's essence, behold all things in Him.<sup>2</sup> Nor is our faith on earth blind, for though its mysteries are impenetrable to reason, our motives for believing them are evidently known. Its divine origin is attested by miracles, of which the greatest is the conversion of the world to Christianity :

"Wherefore holdest thou that each,  
 The elder proposition and the new,  
 Which so persuade thee, are the voice of Heaven?'  
 'The works that follow'd, evidence their truth;'  
 I answer'd: 'Nature did not make for these  
 The iron hob, or on her anvil mold them.'  
 'Who voucheth to thee of the works themselves,'  
 Was the reply, 'that they in very deed  
 Are that they purport? None hath sworn so to thee.'  
 'That all the world,' said I, 'should have been turn'd

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<sup>1</sup> "Theology is a science, because it is deduced from premisses known by the light of a superior science, viz., the science of God and of the Blessed."—*S.* i. q. 1, a. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.* xxiv. 54.



To Christian, and no miracle been wrought,  
 Would in itself be such a miracle,  
 The rest were not an hundredth part so great.'"  
 —*Par. xxiv. 95.*

Many doctrines of the faith, which at first appear contradictory, on deeper consideration prove true :

" But to the end  
 This truth may stand more clearly in your view,<sup>1</sup>  
 I will content thee even to thy wish."—*Par. iv. 69.*

Some of its dogmas reason can prove from physical and metaphysical arguments ;<sup>2</sup> such as, for instance, the nobility of the human soul, the existence, unity, and eternity of God,<sup>3</sup> and that He is the sole and necessary object of our love :<sup>4</sup>

" In this palace is the weal  
 That Alpha and Omega is, to all  
 The lessons love can read me."—*Par. xxvi. 18.*

" Philosophy, (said I) hath arguments,  
 And this place hath authority enough,  
 To imprint in me such love : for, of constraint,  
 Good, inasmuch as we perceive the good,  
 Kindles our love ; and in degree the more,  
 As it comprises more of goodness in it.  
 The essence then, where such advantage is,  
 That each good, found without it, is nought else  
 But of His light the beam,<sup>5</sup> must needs attract

<sup>1</sup> " With regard to those things also concerning God, which fall within the range of human reason, a divine revelation was still needed for our instruction ; for by the investigations of reason alone the truth concerning God would be attained but by few, and after years of labour and with the admixture of many errors." S. i. q. 1, a. 1. On the use of reason with regard to matters of faith : Cf. Augustin. *Ep.* 120 ; Thom. *Cont. Gent.* 1. 8 ; *Prolog. ad 2 Sent.* q. 1, a. 3, sol. 3 ; Bonaventura *in 1. Sent.* Proem. q. 2.

<sup>2</sup> S. i. q. 2, a. 2 ; q. ii. a. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Conv.* iv. 21.

<sup>3</sup> *Par. xxiv. 128.*

<sup>5</sup> S. i. q. 6, a. 4.

The soul of each one, loving, who the truth  
Discerns, on which this proof is built."

—*Par.* xxvi. 25.

It is the special privilege of love to be quick to seize this harmony between the truths of faith and the inner life of the soul:

"Brother! no eye of man not perfected,  
Nor fully ripen'd in the flame of love,  
May fathom this decree."—*Par.* vii. 55.

Dante represents the connection between philosophy and theology, and nature and grace, under various figures. He makes the four natural or cardinal virtues conduct him to Beatrice, but the three divine virtues have previously strengthened his eyes, to enable him to gaze into hers,<sup>1</sup> for without divine assistance man cannot apprehend the truth. The relation of Virgil to Beatrice expresses generally how nature aspires to grace, and is elevated and perfected by it.

The three parts of the *Divina Commedia* each close, as we have said, with the same word, "stars," symbolising the end of all life and existence. The stars greet the poet as he emerges from Hell; when he gains the summit of the Mount of Purgatory, he is pure, and fit to rise to the stars; and in Paradise he beholds the Love "that moves the sun and all the stars."<sup>2</sup> Thus the idea of Philosophy, as "loving all Wisdom commands," leads the poet up to religion, to the Christian faith, to God, and then, looking back from that vantage-ground, the kingdoms of the world, the whole wide sea of being, lie spread out before his eyes:

"I straight obeyed; and with mine eye return'd  
Through all the seven spheres; and saw this globe  
So pitiful of semblance, that perforce  
It moved my smiles."—*Par.* xxii. 129.

<sup>1</sup> Note 2, p. 79, on the relation of theology to the human sciences.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.* xxxii. 135.

Such expressions of humility are a rebuke to modern pride of intellect. Master of all science, old and new, then explored, Dante is as courageous and outspoken in his child-like confession of faith, as in his stern denunciations of emperors and popes. "For it should be understood that the glances of this lady are so liberally bestowed upon us, not alone to show that face that we can see, but yet more to kindle our longing for and striving after those things which she holds concealed. Therefore, as through her, the reason sees many of these things, so also through her we believe that every miracle can have its reason in a higher intellect, and consequently can be. This, therefore, is the source of our Faith, from which grows Hope, desiring that which we foresee, and from hope Love is born; and by these three virtues man, through philosophy, ascends to the heavenly Athens."<sup>1</sup>

In the realistic treatment of his allegory, to which we have often adverted, Dante is guided by St. Thomas, who says that, by a law of our nature, we are led from sensuous to supersensuous things, from things material to things spiritual.<sup>2</sup>

"Thus needs, that ye may apprehend, we speak:  
 Since from things sensible alone ye learn  
 That which, digested rightly, after turns  
 To intellectual. For no other cause  
 The Scripture, condescending graciously  
 To your perception, hands and feet to God  
 Attributes, nor so means."—*Par.* iv. 40.

But further, history, and more especially sacred history, is so ordered by Him Who is able to speak not only by

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* iii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> "The Sacred Scripture fitly employs material images to express divine and spiritual things. For God provides for all His creatures according to the special nature of each; and man naturally arrives by means of sensible things to things intelligible, for all our knowledge comes first from the senses."—i. q. 1, a. 9.

words, like man, but through persons, institutions, and events, as to form a type of future and spiritual things, and an expression of them. It is this thought which governs all the exuberant wealth of persons, situations, and events in the *Divina Commedia*. What is true of the individual is true of the human race, and of the whole creation :

" Know ye not  
That we are worms, yet made at last to form  
The winged insect, imp'd with angel plumes,  
That to heaven's justice unobstructed soars ? "

— *Purg.* x. 112.

As the butterfly forms itself unseen within the chrysalis, so does the city of God develop unseen in the midst of this city of sin, death, and dissolution. This symbolism is the guiding principle in the construction of the *Inferno*, and of the whole edifice of the three kingdoms of the other world. In the inmost depths and centre of the earth, the region of eternal night and frost, dwells Lucifer, type of the spirit excluded from the light and life of God, ice-bound in selfishness and malice ; and the degrees of sin are measured in Hell by the gradual narrowing of its circles towards this point. In Purgatory the soul begins to ascend ; as it mounts, the labour of the ascent lessens, and when it arrives at the summit its will has become pure, free, and unwarped, as erst in Paradise. The nine successive heavenly spheres form an ascent parallel to the descending spiral of the nine circles of Hell, through which the soul mounts on the ladder of the various virtues and joys, to the blessed vision of God. Arrived in Saturn, the abode of contemplative souls, the poet despises the earth, now far away below him, and thus grows more and more capable of seeing the highest good, until at last he beholds Beatrice in glory in the Empyrean, close beneath Mary. He invokes her name, and thanks her for his

deliverance from bondage, and for the last time Beatrice smiles upon him :

" Answering not, mine eyes I raised,  
And saw her, where aloof she sat, her brow  
A wreath reflecting of eternal beams.  
Not from the centre of the sea so far  
Unto the region of the highest thunder,  
As was my ken from hers ; and yet the form  
Came through that medium down, unmix'd and pure.  
' O Lady ! thou in whom my hopes have rest ;  
Who, for my safety, hast not scorn'd, in Hell  
To leave the traces of thy footsteps mark'd ;  
For all mine eyes have seen, I to thy power  
And goodness, virtue owe and grace. Of slave  
Thou hast to freedom brought me : and no means,  
For my deliverance apt, hast left untried.  
Thy liberal bounty still toward me keep :  
That when my spirit, which thou madest whole,  
Is loosen'd from this body, it may find  
Favour with thee.' So I my suit prefer'd ;  
And she, so distant, as appear'd, look'd down  
And smiled."—*Par.* xxxi. 64.

Thus in Dante's hand the real Beatrice and her spirit idealised form one character. From their first meeting in childhood to that when she smiles upon him for the last time from the bosom of God,<sup>1</sup> she is manifested in a gradual progress of transfiguration and glorification. It is her form which gives dramatic interest and movement to the whole process of absolution, purification, illumination, and beatification. In her, theology and poetry, speculation and phantasy, are admirably united.

Grouped and moving around her is a whole world of figures, taken partly from ancient and Roman, but chiefly from Italian history, and of biblical and mythological personages, all symbols of various virtues and vices. Beatrice

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* xxx. 28.

sits with Rachel in the third circle of the heavenly Paradise, at the feet of Eve, who is in the second. The Mother of God is in the first. There are assembled the representatives of the old covenant, the patriarchs and progenitors, male and female, of Christ, according to the flesh; and the Apostles, the Fathers of the Church, and founders of Orders, the princes of the New Testament. The various virtues, personified in different saints, are divided amongst the several spheres. The nine circles of Hell are peopled in the same manner with characters taken from ancient, later, and even present times, their various torments represent the nature and the punishment of the sins of which they form a type. In the lowest depths of Hell, Lucifer crunches with his teeth Judas Iscariot, Brutus, and Cassius, the former the betrayer of Christ, the two latter traitors to the Emperor. The penances of Purgatory are in like manner represented by historical personages; and here the possibility of a deathbed repentance makes the poet extend the hope of salvation to many, whose lives were by no means free from sin.

Dante's treatment of the ancient Pagan myths, which are freely employed in his poem, is original and striking. Occasionally he deals with them as real historical events,<sup>1</sup> but for the most part he follows the Fathers of the Church, in representing the heathen worship of gods and heroes as an attempt of the demons to substitute for the kingdom of God a kingdom of their own.<sup>2</sup> These fabulous gods themselves preside as devils over the nine circles of Hell. Charon is the ferryman; Minos the judge. Cerberus worries the gluttons; Pluto tyrannises over the covetous and spend-thrifts; the Furies have charge of the lower city of Dis;

<sup>1</sup> The contest of Hercules with the giant Antæus. *Conv.* iii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xii. 24; Luke viii. 30; 1 Tim. iv. 1; 1 Cor. x. 20: Acts xvi. 16-18; Ps. xcvi. 5. "All the Gods of the Gentiles are devils." Justin. *Apolog.* i. 5; Satian. *adv. Græc.* c. 8-16; Athenag. *Leg.* c. 23-27.

the Harpies torment suicides, and so throughout. Thus they are treated as types of the sins, which are punished in their respective circles. At the same time he takes other mythological representations in a purely metaphorical sense. The four rivers of Hell, or rather the single stream, with its four names and attributes, Acheron, Styx, Phlegethon, Cocytus, is the sensible image of the rivers of tears and blood caused by sin and violence in the world, and flowing down into Hell.

## CHAPTER VIII

## GOD AND CREATION.

WE will now consider in more detail the substance of Dante's theology. We learn by reason alone, but more fully from revelation, to believe in God and His essential Unity :

"I in one God believe ;  
 One sole eternal Godhead, of whose love  
 All heaven is moved, Himself unmoved the while.<sup>1</sup>  
 Nor demonstration physical alone,  
 Persuades me to that faith : but from that truth  
 It cometh to me rather which is shed  
 Through Moses, the rapt prophets, and the psalms,  
 The gospel, and what ye yourselves did write,  
 When ye were gifted of the Holy Ghost."

—*Par.* xxiv. 128.

Nevertheless no created mind can comprehend God, for God alone is the adequate measure of Himself, "*sè in sè misura.*"<sup>2</sup> He knows all things as they are, but none know Him as He is :

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<sup>1</sup> "As matter cannot set itself in motion, there must be some first mover. This is God, Who, unmoved Himself, moves everything, because He is the universal object of desire."—*Aristotel. Metaph.* xii. 6. 11; 7. 2. 8, xii. 7, 7. For the five metaphysical proofs of God's existence, as first Mover, first Cause, the one necessarily self-existing Being, the Highest Good, supreme Intelligence, see St. Thomas, S. i. q. 2, a. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.* xix. 51.



"Who is truth's mirror, and Himself  
 Parhelion unto all things, and naught else  
 To Him."—*Par.* xxvi. 106.

Not only does He contain all truth in Himself, but He is the Truth,<sup>1</sup> through which alone all true things are true.<sup>2</sup> Consequently He is the good of the intellect, "il ben del intelletto."<sup>3</sup> He is the highest good, and outside of Him all good is but the radiation from His goodness, and therefore limited and finite.<sup>4</sup> Therefore all things yearn towards Him, because in Him alone all desires are satisfied.<sup>5</sup> Thus He is the end, as He is the first cause of all motion, being the object of that desire, which by impulse in the lower creatures, and love<sup>6</sup> in the higher creatures, penetrates the universe.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Intellectual (subjective) truth means that the mind apprehends the thing as it really is. Truth in things (objective) means the conformity of the thing with the idea of it. If such then be the nature of truth, it is found eminently in God; for not only is His essence conformed to His intelligence, but it is His intelligence. And this intelligence is the measure and cause of every other intelligence, and He is His essence and His intelligence. Hence not only is He true, but the first and sovereign truth."—*S. i. q. 16, a. 5.*

<sup>2</sup> *Par.* xxxiii. 51.

<sup>3</sup> *Hell*, iii. 17.

<sup>4</sup> "My opinion is, that in the world of knowledge the idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort; and when seen, is also inferred to be the universal Author of all things beautiful and right, Parent of light and Word of light in this world, and the source of truth and reason in the other."—*Plato, Republic*, Bk. vii. p. 517, Jowett's trans.

<sup>5</sup> *Par.* xxvi. 28; ix. 7.

<sup>6</sup> *Par.* i. 109.

<sup>7</sup> "Every creature by its action or movements tends to its end in one of two ways—by self-movement, as man, or by being moved by another in a determined direction, as the arrow, which takes its flight and course according to the aim of the shooter. Rational creatures move themselves to their end, because the power of choice, which comes from their reason and will, makes them master of their actions. Irrational creatures, on the contrary, seek their end by their natural instincts, being moved thereto, as it were, by another, and not by themselves; for they know not the meaning of an end. . . . For in regard to God, every irrational creature is as an instrument in the hands of a principal agent."—*S. i. 2, q. 1, a. 2.* "In three ways God

Creatures show forth His glory in various degrees, just as bodies in different ways reflect the light of the sun :

"His glory, by Whose might all things are moved,  
Pierces the universe, and in one part  
Sheds more resplendence, elsewhere less."—*Par. i. l.*

Uncircumscribed Himself, but circumscribing all things,<sup>1</sup> God dwells in the Empyrean, the fiery or glowing Heaven, so-called because, though omnipresent, God there manifests Himself in the flames of divine love.<sup>2</sup> This highest Heaven consists of pure light; its wondrous expanse contains the universe. Incorporeal itself, all bodies move within it, whilst it remains unmoved. In that Essential Intellectual Light the blessed dwell.<sup>3</sup> God is unchangeable. White and black stand ever unaltered in the book of His knowledge.<sup>4</sup> He is immeasurable, and therefore coexists with all that fills space and time. Who sees God, sees in Him "the when and where" of all things.<sup>5</sup> Himself infinite perfection, all His attributes are equally perfect; hence He is named "the primal symmetry" (*la prima equalità*). In God, knowledge, will, and power are coequal, and in this the blessed in their degree participate :

"To each among your tribe, what time ye kenn d  
The nature, in whom nought unequal dwells,

acts in created agents : 1. *As their end*. Since every action is undertaken for some good, real or apparent, God, being the one exemplar of all goodness, is necessarily the final cause of every action. 2. *As agent*. In a series of subordinate agents, the second acts by the power of the first, for the first agent moves the second to act, and thus all things act by the power of God, Who is the cause of all created action. 3. *As form*. God not only applies things to act by setting their forms and powers in action, as the workman uses his axe to cut, but he gives to creatures which act their forms, and preserves them in being. . . . And since the form of each creature is something intrinsic to it, . . . God, being the one universal cause most intimately present in all things, acts intimately in all."—*S. i. q. 105, a. 5.*

<sup>1</sup> *Par. xiv. 28.*

<sup>2</sup> *Purg. xi. 3.*

<sup>3</sup> *Par. xxx. 50.*

<sup>4</sup> *Par. xv. 49.*

<sup>5</sup> *Par. xxix. 12.*

Wisdom and love were in one measure dealt;  
 For that they are so equal in the sun,  
 From whence ye drew your radiance and your heat,  
 As makes all likeness scant."—*Par.* xv. 71.

The will of God is the origin and principle of all law and justice, and apart from it no law is just, or binds:<sup>1</sup>

"The primal will, that in itself is good,  
 Hath from itself, the chief Good, ne'er been moved.  
 Justice consists in consonance with it."

—*Par.* xix. 83.

All the perfections that we see in finite things are in Him, but in an infinitely nobler manner, as in a single simple unextended luminous ray.<sup>2</sup> "Heaven and all nature hangs upon this point."<sup>3</sup> In the one God there is a Trinity of Persons. The bliss of the Divinity consists in the everlasting circuminsession of the Father in the Son, of the Son in the Father, of Both in the Holy Ghost, and of the Holy Ghost in the Father and the Son.<sup>4</sup> This the poet beholds for one instant, and describes in the last stanzas of *Paradise*:

<sup>1</sup> According to Dante, God loves with the same divine will justice and Himself; for the law is a good, and all good is primarily in God, and is indeed God Himself. St. Thomas expands the same thought when he speaks to this effect: "The law is a rule by which actions are directed to their right end; and as in a series of movers the power of the second is derived from that of the first, so in government. All subordinate rulers act only in virtue of Him Who is supreme. . . . Thus all human law, which is inferior to the divine, derives its power from that eternal law which is the rule of government in the Supreme Ruler; and human law is only just when it corresponds to the eternal law, from which it proceeds, and unjust when it deviates therefrom."—*Cf.* S. i. 2. q. 93, a. 2.

<sup>2</sup> "As God by one act understands all things in His essence, so by one act He wills all things in His goodness."—S. i. q. 19, a. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Par.* xxviii. 38.

<sup>4</sup> "Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?" *John* xiv. 11.

"Eternal Light!

Sole in Thyself that dwellest, and of Thyself  
Sole understood, past, present, and to come."<sup>1</sup>

—*Par.* xxxiii. 115.

Dante endeavours to portray what he saw :

"In that abyss

Of radiance, clear and lofty, seem'd, methought,  
Three orbs of triple hue, clipt in one bound :  
And, from another, one reflected seem'd,  
As rainbow is from rainbow : and the third  
Seem'd fire, breathed equally from both."

—*Par.* xxxiii. 107.

"Glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit" is the cry that rings through Paradise :<sup>2</sup>

"Him, Who lives ever, and for ever reigns,  
In mystic union of the Three in One,  
Unbounded, bounding all."—*Par.* xiv. 26.

God is the "trinal beam of an individual star ;"<sup>3</sup> so that of Him it may be equally said, "They are," or "He is" (*Sunt et est*).<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the mystery of the Trinity is absolutely incomprehensible :

"Insane,

Who hopes our reason may that space explore,  
Which holds three persons in one substance knit."

—*Purg.* iii. 32.

Creation was an act of God's free love. Himself the Highest Good, and incapable of increase, He made finite

<sup>1</sup> "The proof or argument for the plurality of persons, furnished by the plenitude of the Divine Goodness, is obtained by a parity of reasoning from the plenitude of the (divine) happiness. . . . As charity is ever united with goodness and happiness, it must exist where the joy is supreme. And as joyful love must be mutual, therefore in that sovereign happiness, mutual love cannot but be found."—*Rich. a. S. Victor, De Trinit.* iii. 3. Cf. Bonavent. *Itiner. Ment.* vi. 65.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.* xxvii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Par.* xxxi. 25.

<sup>4</sup> *Par.* xxiv. 134.

beings, not for His own gain, but to manifest His glory in them :

“Not for increase to Himself<sup>1</sup>  
Of good, which may not be increased, but forth  
To manifest His glory, by its beams  
Inhabiting His own eternity.”—*Par. xxix. 13.*

The world was made in time, and time with the world.  
Before the world was made, time was not, nor “before” nor  
“after.”<sup>2</sup>

“Beyond time’s limit, or what bound soe’er  
To circumscribe His being; as He will’d,  
Into new natures, like unto Himself,  
Eternal love unfolded: nor before,  
As if in dull reaction, torpid lay;  
For, not in process of before or aft,  
Upon these waters moved the Spirit of God.”

—*Par. xxix. 17.*

Before creation there was nothing, not even formless matter. Pure spirit, the elements, form and matter, and the union of both, are all the work of the creation :

“Simple and mixed, both form and substance,<sup>3</sup> forth  
To perfect being started, like three darts

<sup>1</sup> “Since the goodness of God is perfect and independent of all else, it is incapable of increase; from no necessity did God will other things to be.”—*S. i. q. 19, a. 3.* “Imperfect agents act because they have a need to supply, for it is proper to their nature to be at the same time active and passive (or receptive) (*agere et pati*). But this is not so with God, who alone is supremely liberal, because He acts, not for His own gain, but from His goodness alone.”—*S. i. q. 44, a. 4.*

<sup>2</sup> “For if eternity and time be rightly distinguished in this, that time does not exist without some movement and transition, whilst eternity is changeless, time evidently could not be, had not some creature been made, which by motion gave birth to change. The various parts of which motion and change, as they cannot be simultaneous, succeed one another; and thus in these shorter or longer intervals of duration time began.”—*De Civ. Dei*, xi. 6. Cf. Dods’ trans.

<sup>3</sup> “Together, at the beginning of time, out of nothing God made both creatures, the spiritual and the bodily; the angelic, namely, and the earthly; and thus human nature is formed, as it were, both of spirit and body.”—*Conc. Later. iv. Cap. Firmiter.*

Shot from a bow three-corded. And as ray  
In crystal, glass, and amber, shines entire  
E'en at the moment of its issuing ; thus  
Did from the Eternal Sovran, beam entire  
His threefold operation, at one act  
Produced coeval."—*Par.* xxix. 24.

The idea of the creature is beheld by the Creator in His Word, the hypostatic expression of His knowledge.<sup>1</sup> In Him, He contemplates the ideal world complete, knows all things before their creation, and loves them with the Son in the Spirit. All creation therefore is a faint reflection of that Light, which has been generated by the Father from eternity. God created the world as the work of His intelligence and love, through the Son in the Spirit:

"Looking into His first-born with the love,  
Which breathes from both eternal, the first Might"  
Ineffable, wherever eye or mind  
Can roam, hath in such order all disposed,  
As none may see and fail to enjoy."—*Par.* x. i.

At the same time, there is a difference in creatures. Some are created as they are, directly by God ; others are generated by the union of form and matter, and thus only mediately created :

<sup>1</sup> "As God by one act understands Himself and all things, His one Word expresses not only Himself, but all creatures."—S. i. q. 34, a. 3.

<sup>2</sup> "The Father is called the Creator, because He receives from no one the power to create. Of the Son it is said 'per,' through whom all things were created. For although He possesses the same power, He receives it from another, the preposition 'per' signifying generally a mediate or mean cause. . . . The Spirit, who receives the same power from both (Father and Son), is called the supreme governor or vivifier of what the Father creates through the Son. . . . To the Father is appropriated *power*, which is specially manifested in creation ; to the Son *wisdom*, by which every intelligent agent operates ; to the Holy Spirit *goodness*, for government consists in guiding things to their proper end and in giving them life, which is a certain interior movement ; now the first mover is the end and the goodness."—S. i. q. 45, a. 6, ad 2.

"The angels, O my brother! and this clime  
 Wherein thou art, impassible and pure,  
 I call created, even as they are  
 In their whole being. But the elements,  
 Which thou hast named, and what of them is made,  
 Are by created virtue inform'd; create,  
 Their substance; and create, the informing virtue  
 In these bright stars, that round them circling move."

—*Par.* vii. 127.

Those creatures which derive their existence immediately from God are by nature immortal; they are not subject to the control of the stars or of any other creature, and in this they specially resemble the divine nature. To this class man belongs:

"What distills  
 Immediate thence, no end of being knows;  
 Bearing its seal immutably imprest.  
 Whatever thence immediate falls, is free,  
 Free wholly, uncontrollable by power  
 Of each thing new."—*Par.* vii. 63.

Beings begotten solely of creatures are subject to them, and more especially to the heavenly bodies. They express, therefore, less perfectly the divine idea; they are short-lived and corruptible. The souls of men are alike; the differences between man and man come from the physical organs:

"The brightness of the seal should be complete:  
 But nature renders it imperfect ever;  
 Resembling thus the artist, in her work,  
 Whose faltering hand is faithless to his skill."

—*Par.* xiii. 70.

But all creatures are the instruments of the Divinity, Who transmits His influence from the higher to the lower creatures:

"Thus do these organs of the world proceed,  
 As thou beholdest now, from step to step;

Their influence from above deriving,  
And thence transmitting downwards."<sup>1</sup>—*Par. ii. 120.*

Love not only establishes the universe, but governs it continually through Providence, by which the creature is directed to its end as surely as the well-shot arrow to its mark. Providence, overruling all things, makes the universe a work of art, and preserves it from ruin :

"The Good, that guides  
And blessed makes this realm which thou dost mount,  
Ordains its providence to be the virtue  
In these great bodies: nor the natures only  
The All-perfect Mind provides for, but with them  
That which preserves them too; for nought, that lies  
Within the range of that unerring bow  
But is as level with the destined aim,  
As ever mark to arrow's point opposed.<sup>2</sup>  
Were it not thus, these heavens, thou dost visit,  
Would their effect so work, it would not be  
Art, but destruction."—*Par. viii. 103.*

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<sup>1</sup> "Whether mediately or immediately, all that is has its being from Him; the higher intelligences receive their light from His Brightness, and like mirrors reflect its rays to those below them." The created intelligences and the heavenly bodies derive from God their being, and likewise their active powers, but it is God Who works in and through them.—*Epistle to Can Grande*. "Unless natural things did act, their natural forms and powers would be given them in vain. . . . And this is repugnant to the Divine Goodness, which is essentially diffusive. For the same reason things are made like to God, not only in their being, but also in their action. God, therefore, is the cause of the creature's action, both in giving it the active power, in preserving that power, in setting it in action, and because by His power all other powers act. . . . Hence He acts immediately in every agent, while the action of the creature's power is preserved intact."—*Thom. q. 3, de Potent. a. 7.*

<sup>2</sup> "Creatures are not only good in their nature, but also in relation to their end, and especially to their last end, the Divine Goodness. . . . And as the Divine Intelligence is the cause of all things, . . . this idea of the relation of creatures to their end must have pre-existed in the mind of God, but the establishing of this relation is proper to Providence."—*S. i. q. 22, a. 1.* "And as regards predestination, since



The designs of Providence are impenetrable to the created mind, however acute it be,<sup>1</sup> yet the providence and pre-vision of God in noways affects man's freedom :

"But hence deriveth not necessity,  
More than the tall ship, hurried down the flood,  
Is driven by the eye that looks on it."<sup>2</sup>

—*Par.* xvii. 40.

Simultaneously with the world were the angels created,<sup>3</sup> but in their case the creative act completed immediately,

no creature can attain to it (eternal life) by his own power, he must be impelled thereto by another, like an arrow shot by the archer at the mark."—*S.* q. 23, a. 1.

"Oh Thou who biddest time from age to issue forth,  
And, motionless Thyself, hast made all things to move,  
Forced by no outward cause this ductile mass to form,  
Thyself the essential form of highest good,  
Envious of nought ; Thyself sole archetype of all  
That is ! Beauty beyond compare, the ideal world  
In Thee Thy beauty bears, and by Thy will  
The outward image answers part to part  
And perfect as the exemplar is the whole.

Rest of the just man's soul, the sight of Thee his end ;  
Beginning, ruler, guide, at once our way and goal."

—*Boeth.*, *De Consol.* iii. 9.

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* xi. 27.

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas thus illustrates this difficult mystery : "As a man walking along a road sees not those who follow him, whilst another on a height observes the whole road, and beholds at one glance all who are passing along it, so God sees things in His eternity, which is above all time. . . . A higher cause, though necessary, may produce a contingent effect if the proximate cause be contingent. Thus a plant may or may not grow, because the plant, the proximate cause of the growth, is contingent upon the action of the sun, the first cause. So God knows some things as contingent on account of their proximate causes, although the knowledge of God, Who is the first cause, is necessary."—*S.* i. q. 14, a. 13 ad 3 et 1.

<sup>3</sup> "It seems more probable that the angels were created simultaneously with bodily creatures. For the angels are part of the universe, and no part is perfect separated from its whole. Although the contrary opinion (of St. Jerome and the Greek Fathers) must not be thought erroneous."—*S.* i. q. 61, a. 5.

and at once, their whole being. Of nature wholly immaterial, they are pure forms, yet potentiality and act can be distinguished in them, God alone being *actus purus*—pure act.<sup>1</sup> No man can tell their number, for they were made to be the mirrors of God's majesty, and the individual perfections of each is determined by its nearness to Him :<sup>2</sup>

“ No mortal tongue  
Nor thought of man, hath ever reach'd so far,  
That of these natures he might count the tribes.  
What Daniel of their thousands hath reveal'd,  
With finite number, infinite conceals.  
The fountain, at whose source these drink their beams,  
With light supplies them in as many modes,  
As there are splendours that it shines on ; each  
According to the virtue it conceives,  
Differing in love and sweet affection.  
Look then how lofty and how huge in breadth  
The eternal might which, broken and dispersed<sup>3</sup>  
Over such countless mirrors, yet remains  
Whole in itself and one, as at the first.”

—*Par. xxix. 137.*

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<sup>1</sup> In the case of a form existing not in matter, there still remains the relation of the form to its actual existence, as of potentiality to act. And this composition is to be understood as existing in the angels, and accordingly it is called by some, composition of existence (*quo est*) and form (*quod est*), or of *esse* and *quod est*. For the latter is the form which subsists, while the former is that *ipsum esse*, that existence by which the form is subsisting. Now in God the *esse*, form or essence, is not distinct from existence ; hence He alone is *actus purus*, pure act.” —S. i. q. 50, a. 2 ad 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Par. xxix. 13-18.*

<sup>3</sup> As to the motive for creating the angels, St. Thomas says : “ The existence of incorporeal creatures of some kind must be admitted ; for God's principal purpose in creation is the good which consists in the resemblance of creatures to Himself. But the resemblance of an effect to its cause is only perfect, when it is like precisely in that which produces the effect, as, e.g., a hot thing begets heat. Now God produces creatures by His intellect and will. If the universe is to be perfect, then (as a likeness of Him) there must be some purely intellectual creatures.” —S. i. q. 50, a. 1 ; *Cont. Gent. ii. 91*. As to their numbers he says, “ It is reasonable to suppose that their number exceeds beyond comparison that of material creatures.” —S. i. q. 50, a. 3.

As the angels behold God Himself, they can never withdraw their eyes from Him ; and their contemplation being unbroken, they have no need of memory to recall past impressions :

“ Know thou, that from the first, these substances,  
Rejoicing in the countenance of God,  
Have held unceasingly their view, intent  
Upon the glorious vision, from the which  
Nought absent is nor hid : where then no change  
Of newness, with succession, interrupts<sup>1</sup>  
Remembrance, there, needs none to gather up  
Divided thought and images remote.”—*Par.* xxix. 77.

The angels' vision of things in God varies according to their rank in the spiritual hierarchy;<sup>2</sup> therefore their knowledge is limited,<sup>3</sup> and the secrets of grace and predestination, unless especially revealed, are hidden from them.<sup>4</sup> In regard to the future,<sup>5</sup> their knowledge of events, which necessarily flow from their causes, is certain, and conjectural as to those which are contingent. The probation of the angels followed immediately upon their creation. Lucifer and a portion of the angels fell from pride.<sup>6</sup> They now lie crushed by the earth, which they would fain have involved in their ruin. The faithful angels are rewarded

<sup>1</sup> “As regards his knowledge of the Word and what he sees in the Word, an angel is never in potentiality, for he always actually contemplates the Word and what he sees in It. In that vision his beatitude consists, for beatitude consists not in habit but in act.”—*S. i. q. 58, a. 1.*

<sup>2</sup> *Conv.* iii. 6 ; *Par.* i. 103.

<sup>3</sup> *S. i. q. 57, a. 5.*

<sup>4</sup> *Par.* xx. 70, 126, xxi. 90.

<sup>5</sup> *Conv.* iii. 6.

<sup>6</sup> “Lucifer wished to be like God, not by absolute independence of Him, for such a desire would have involved, he knew, his own ruin ; but in that he chose to fix his last end and happiness within the compass of his own natural strength, and thus turned away from the supernatural happiness which God alone could give him. Or if he did desire that supernatural likeness to God which is the effect of grace, he desired to acquire it by his natural strength alone, and without the divine assistance.”—*S. i. q. 62, a. 2.*

by the abiding vision of God, and a will for ever confirmed in good :<sup>1</sup>

"Ere one had reckon'd twenty, e'en so soon  
Part of the angels fell : and in their fall,  
Confusion to your elements ensued.<sup>2</sup>  
The others kept their station : and this task,  
Whereon thou look'st, began, with such delight,  
That they surcease not, ever, day nor night,  
Their circling. Of that fatal lapse the cause  
Was the curst pride of him, whom thou hast seen  
Pent with the world's incumbrance.<sup>3</sup> Those, whom here  
Thou seest, were lowly to confess themselves  
Of His free bounty, Who had made them apt  
For ministries so high : therefore their views  
Were, by enlightening grace and their own merit  
Exalted ; so that in their will confirm'd  
They stand, nor fear to fall."—*Par.* xxix. 49.

Those angels who would not fight either for God or against Him are imprisoned, as we have seen, with the undecided in the threshold of Hell.<sup>4</sup> The rebel angels retain their great natural intellectual powers, and Guido da Montefeltro sorrowfully confesses the devil a logician.<sup>5</sup> But they are deprived of the contemplation of truth, "il ben dell' intelletto,"<sup>6</sup> a loss to their spiritual nature, therefore, of all the most bitter.<sup>7</sup> Envious of man's happiness, they

<sup>1</sup> "We must firmly hold, according to Catholic faith, that the will of the good angels is confirmed in good, and that of the demons obstinately rooted in evil."—S. i. q. 64, a. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Hell*, xxxiv. 115.

<sup>3</sup> *Conv.* iii. 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Hell*, iii. 35.

<sup>5</sup> *Hell*, xxvii. 118.

<sup>6</sup> *Hell*, iii. 18.

<sup>7</sup> Of the speedy issue of the angelic decision for God, or against Him, St. Thomas says : "The angels acquired beatitude immediately after the first act of charity, by which they merited it ; for grace perfects each nature according to its special mode. But it is proper to the angelic nature to acquire its natural perfection, not by 'discourse' (gradually) but at once, and by its very nature (intuitively). [For an angel sees simultaneously what a thing is and all its properties, a principle and its conclusion, a cause and its effect ; things composite, changeable, and material in simple, unchanging, and spiritual exemplars. All these are

fight to the last hour for the possession of his soul.<sup>1</sup> Their malevolence and craft enable them to exert a baleful influence even on the elements :

“That evil will, which in his intellect  
Still follows evil, came; and raised the wind  
And smoky mist, by virtue of the power  
Given by his nature.”—*Purg.* v. 110.

Tormented themselves in Hell, they maliciously delight in tormenting the damned.<sup>2</sup> And as God is surrounded by the hierarchy of the blessed spirits, ever ascending and descending in rhythmic order, so Lucifer also has his troops of retainers swarming round him, in circles of varying size.

The angels, according to Dante, are engaged in a twofold occupation; they ever contemplate the glory of God, and, secondly, they work for its manifestation among creatures.<sup>3</sup> They are by the divine ordinance divided into three principalities or hierarchies; and as each hierarchy contains three orders, we have the nine orders of spiritual beings which are acknowledged by the Church. Angels, Archangels, and Principalities form the third or lowest hierarchy, whose office is to raise man to their own sphere; Dominations, Virtues, and Powers constitute the second hierarchy; the first consists of the Seraphim, Cherubim, and Thrones. The first hierarchy contemplates the power of the Father; the second, the wisdom of the Son; and the third, the love of the Holy Ghost, Whose gifts it transmits to us. Each Person of the Trinity can, however, be apprehended in a

understood necessarily and intuitively, as we see self-evident truths.] As, then, the angel is ordained by its nature to attain at once its natural perfection, so in the order of grace its first meritorious act rendered it fit for glory, and it at once attained beatitude. . . . The separate instants of their trial must be numbered by their acts,—the first, in which they merited beatitude—the second, in which they attained it.”—S. i. q. 62, a. 5.

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* v. 102.

<sup>2</sup> *Hell*, viii. 35, xxi.

<sup>3</sup> *Conv.* ii. 6, iii. 14.

triple relation, and for this reason each hierarchy has three orders. The Seraphim contemplate the Father in His relation to Himself; the Cherubim in His relation to the Son, as distinct from, and yet one with, Him; the Thrones, in the *Convito*, "Powers," contemplate Him as the Principle from Whom the Holy Ghost proceeds. The gaze of the second hierarchy is fixed on the Son—the Son in Himself, in His relation to the Father, and to the Holy Ghost. The Dominations contemplate Him under the first aspect, the Virtues under the second, the Powers under the third. The Principalities behold the Holy Ghost in Himself, the Archangels in His relation to the Father, the Angels in that to the Son :<sup>1</sup>

"In the first circles, they whom thou beheld'st,  
Are Seraphim and Cherubim. Thus swift  
Follow their hoops, in likeness to the point,  
Near as they can, approaching; and they can  
The more, the loftier their vision. Those  
That round them fleet, gazing the Godhead next,  
Are Thrones, in whom the first trine ends. And all  
Are blessed, even as their sight descends  
Deeper into the truth, wherein rest is  
For every mind. Thus happiness hath root

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<sup>1</sup> Dante, it will be seen, divides the hierarchies on the same principle as St. Thomas, though he disagrees with him in some particulars. "The ideas of those things about which the angels are illuminated can be considered in a triple manner, viz : 1. As proceeding from the first universal principle, the Eternal Father; and thus they are beheld by the first hierarchy, which is in immediate relation with God, and dwells, as St. Dionysius says, on the threshold of the Divinity. 2. As dependent on universal created causes, of which the Son, being the Wisdom of God, is the primal exemplar, and thus they are known by the second hierarchy. 3. As determined in individual objects and dependent on their own immediate and particular causes, in which is contemplated the Holy Ghost, for by His creative energy the divine exemplars are manifested in outward things; and this mode belongs to the third hierarchy."—S. l. q. 108, a. 1. Cf. Coloss. i. 16; Ephes. i. 21; Dionys. Areopag. *De Celest. Hierarch.* c. 3, seq.; Gregor. M. in *Evang. Hom.* ii. 34.

In seeing,<sup>1</sup> not in loving, which of sight  
 Is aftergrowth. And of the seeing such  
 The meed, as unto each, in due degree,  
 Grace and goodwill their measure have assign'd.  
 The other trine, that with still opening buds  
 In this eternal spring-tide blossom fair,  
 Fearless of bruising from the nightly ram,  
 Breathe up in warbled melodies threefold  
 Hosannas, blending ever; from the three,  
 Transmitted, hierarchy of gods for aye  
 Rejoicing; Dominations first; next them,  
 Virtues; and Powers the third; the next to whom  
 Are Princedoms and Archangels, with glad round  
 To tread their festal ring; and last, the band  
 Angelical, disporting in their sphere.  
 All as they circle in their orders, look  
 Aloft; and, downward, with such sway prevail,  
 That all with mutual impulse tend to God."

—*Par.* xxviii. 92.

The joy of the angels<sup>2</sup> is proportioned to the sight they

<sup>1</sup> The poet here touches on the vexed question as to whether the essence of beatitude consists in the sight or in the love of God, and decides, with St. Thomas, for the former. "There are two things necessary to beatitude, what it is essentially, and, second, that which is as it were its accident, the delight resulting from it. Now as beatitude is the attainment of our last end, it cannot consist in an act of the will, which by desire tends to the end when absent, and delights in it when present. Evidently the desire implies not attainment of, but movement towards, that end. And although the will delights because the end is attained, the converse does not hold, viz., that the will has of itself attained that end, because it delights therein. Were this so, to borrow an example from sensible things, a covetous man would by willing obtain what money he would, whereas he has to use his hands and take other means, and thus only does he obtain the money in which he delights. So is it with an intellectual end. We only attain it when the act of the intellect renders it present, after which the will rests delighted in the end possessed."—S. i. 2. q. 3, a. 4.

<sup>2</sup> "The diversity of joy in the blessed arises from the fact that one intellect sees God more perfectly than another. This power of seeing God comes from no natural gift, but from the light of glory, which makes the intellect in a measure godlike (*deiformis*), and the more it receives of the light of glory the more perfect is its vision of God. [The light is given in proportion to the degree of charity informing the

obtain of God by the light of glory, and their share of this is determined by their meritorious correspondence to grace,<sup>1</sup> wherein

"Each  
According to the virtue it conceives  
Differing in love and sweet affection."

—*Par.* xxix. 144.

As executors of the divine purposes in the universe, the angels move first the heavenly bodies,<sup>2</sup> and through them influence other natural substances :

"The virtue and motion of the sacred orbs,  
As mallet by the workman's hand, must needs  
By blessed movers be inspired."—*Par.* ii. 127.

Thus, in accordance with the current mediæval teaching, the nine choirs of angels move the nine celestial spheres, and by means of them control the elements. But their special work is amongst mankind. In Hell, an angel precedes the poet dryshod across the Styx, and opens for him the portals of the city of Dis.<sup>3</sup> At the entrance of Purgatory, Dante is met by an angel, and angels console and encourage<sup>4</sup> the suffering souls, and protect them from the temptations of the Serpent.

"I saw that gentle band silently next  
Look up, as if in expectation held,  
Pale and in lowly guise; and, from on high,

soul at death.] For the greater the charity the greater will be the desire, and desire in a certain sense fits and prepares the soul to receive the desired object."—*S.* i. q. 12, a. 6.

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* xxviii. 103.

<sup>2</sup> "All bodily things are ruled by the angels."—*S.* i. q. 110, a. 1. "If the first agents be regarded as the instruments for producing of all forms, then they themselves virtually contain many forms, as the hammer and strokes of the smith contain all the forms which they fashion on the iron." This image is borrowed from Albertus Magnus, *De Celo et Mundo*, ii. 3, 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Hell*, ix. 81.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* ii. 29.



I saw, forth issuing descend beneath,  
 Two angels, with two flame-illumin'd swords,  
 Broken and mutilated of their points.<sup>1</sup>  
 Green as the tender leaves but newly born,  
 Their vesture was, the which, by wings as green  
 Beaten, they drew behind them, fann'd in air.<sup>2</sup>  
 . . . . . 'From Mary's bosom both  
 Are come,' exclaimed Sordello, 'as a guard  
 Over the vale, 'gainst him, who hither tends,  
 The serpent.'"—*Purg.* viii. 22, 37.

They fight for man in his conflict<sup>3</sup> with the devil,<sup>4</sup> during life, but above all at the hour of death. Thus Buonconte :

"Me God's angel took,  
 Whilst he of Hell exclaimed, 'O thou from Heaven,  
 Say, wherefore hast thou robbed me?'"—*Purg.* v. 101.

The heathen idea of fate, or chance, intervening in human affairs :

"Which at due time,  
 May change the empty vantages of life  
 From race to race, from one to others' blood,  
 Beyond prevention of man's wisest care"—*Hell*, vii. 80,

becomes with Dante the angel Fortuna,<sup>5</sup> who "with fore-

<sup>1</sup> "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?"—*Heb.* i. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Green being the colour of hope, it is worn by the angel of Purgatory. Cf. Bonaventura, *De Sept. Don.*, Sp. S. viii. 8.

<sup>3</sup> "Since the custody of angels is a common benefit, an angel-guardian is deputed to every man, not from his baptism, but from his birth."—S. i. q. 113. a. 5. [Man is thus guarded not exclusively as a Christian but as possessing a rational nature. *Ibid.*]

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* v. 103.

<sup>5</sup> "For we do not say that those causes called fortuitous (hence the name Fortuna) are not real causes, but that they are hidden, and we attribute them to the will of the true God, or to that of some spirit."—*De Civ. Dei*, lib. v. 9, in which St. Augustine refutes the doctrine of Fate. And again Boethius : "Since all fortune, whether propitious or adverse, is intended to reward or prove the just, or to correct and punish the wicked, it must be always regarded as good, being evidently either just or useful."—*De Consol.* iv. 7.

sight plans, judges, and carries on her reign."<sup>1</sup> And since Fortuna has the gift of wisdom equally with the other angels, she should be praised by men :

"They wrongfully  
With blame requite her, and with evil word ;  
But she is blessed, and for that recks not,  
Amidst the other primal beings glad,  
Rolls on her sphere, and in her bliss exults."

—*Hell*, vii. 95.

After the angels ranks man, whose nature Dante in the *Convito* thus extols :—

"Of all the works of Divine Wisdom man is the most wonderful ; for in the human soul God has united three natures—the vegetative, the sensitive, and the intellectual—and has exquisitely adapted the body for the exercise of their respective faculties.<sup>2</sup> The vegetative soul, like the plant, seeks what nourishes it ; the sensitive, like the brute, what is agreeable ; the intellectual soul seeks good.<sup>3</sup> The intellectual soul exists independently of matter, while the sensitive is bound thereto. Thus man is, as it were, submerged in matter up to his head.<sup>4</sup> Owing to this union in our nature of the mortal with the immortal,<sup>5</sup> we see divine things by our reason, but in dusky shadows, and are far less receptive of supernatural light than the angels,<sup>6</sup> who are wholly immaterial. But things should be called according to the nobility of their form, and when we say a man lives, we mean he has the use of his reason, which is his proper life. He who only exercises his senses, lives not as a man, but as a brute.<sup>7</sup> Man is neither body

<sup>1</sup> *Hell*, vii. 88.

<sup>2</sup> *Conv.* iii. 8. See *S.* i. q. 78, a. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *De Vulgar. Eloq.* ii. 1, 2. *S.* i. q. 5, a. 6.

<sup>4</sup> "Certain operations of the soul so far exceed all bodily nature, that they are not exercised through any corporeal organ, and these are the operations of the intellectual soul."—*S.* i. q. 78, a. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Conv.* ii. 9.

<sup>6</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> *Conv.* ii. 8 : "Non vive uomo, ma vive bestia."

only, nor soul only, but soul and body.<sup>1</sup> This is the meaning of Virgil's reply to Dante's question :

"Now not man, man once I was."—*Hell*, i. 63.

But in man there is but one soul, not several, as the Platonists supposed, and in this one soul the three faculties, the vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual, are united. Experience attests the truth of this, since we find that where any one of the faculties is abnormally excited, the activity of the others is impeded :<sup>2</sup>

"When, by sensations of delight or pain,  
That any of our faculties hath seized,  
Entire the soul collects herself, it seems  
She is intent upon that power alone ;  
And thus the error is disproved, which holds  
The soul not singly lighted in the breast.  
And therefore whenas aught is heard or seen  
That firmly keeps the soul toward it turn'd,  
Time passes, and a man perceives it not.  
For that, whereby we hearken, is one power ;  
Another that, which the whole spirit hath :  
This is as it were bound, while that is free."

—*Purg.* iv. i.

As intelligence and free-will proceed from a principle not corporeal, the substance of the soul must be of a nature independent of the body, and our actions are therefore free :

"Spirit, substantial form, with matter join'd,  
Not in confusion mix'd, hath in itself  
Specific virtue of that union born,

<sup>1</sup> "We have shown that the soul by itself is not sensitive ; and since sensibility belongs to man, though not to him alone, man must be not only soul, but something composed of soul and body."—S. i. q. 75, a. 4 ad 2.

<sup>2</sup> "The fact that one operation of the soul, when intense, impedes another, shows the principle of its operations to be essentially one."—S. i. q. 76, a. 3.

Which is not felt except it work, nor proved  
 But through effect, as vegetable life  
 By the green leaf.<sup>1</sup> From whence his intellect  
 Deduced its primal notices of things,  
 Man therefore knows not, or his appetites  
 Their first affections,<sup>2</sup> such in you, as zeal  
 In bees to gather honey; at the first,  
 Volition, meriting nor blame nor praise.  
 But o'er each lower faculty supreme,  
 That, as she list, are summon'd to her bar,  
 Ye have that virtue in you, whose just voice  
 Uttereth counsel, and whose word should keep  
 The threshold of assent.<sup>3</sup> Here is the source,  
 Whence cause of merit in you is derived;  
 E'en as the affections, good or ill, she takes,  
 Or severs, winnow'd as the chaff."—*Purg.* xviii. 47.

The rational soul is created immediately by God,<sup>4</sup> and is therefore independent of the body, in its origin :

"The angels, O my brother, and this clime  
 Wherein thou art, impassible and pure,  
 I called created, even as they are  
 In their whole being. But the elements,  
 Which thou hast named, and what of them is made,  
 Are by created virtue inform'd: create,  
 Their substance; and create, the informing virtue  
 In these bright stars, that round them circling move.

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<sup>1</sup> "None but self-subsisting beings act by themselves, for action is proper only to being in act (*ens in actu*). Every being, therefore, acts according to its being (or nature), and consequently the human soul, which is called intellect or mind, is something incorporeal and self-subsisting."—S. I. q. 95, a. 2.

<sup>2</sup> "The desire of happiness is simply the desire that the will may be satisfied, and this all men want."—S. I. 2. q. 5, a. 8.

<sup>3</sup> "Man differs from irrational creatures in that he is master of his own acts, and therefore those actions only of which he is master are called human. And as his reason and will give man this dominion over his acts, his free-will is called the faculty of reason and will."—S. I. 2. q. 1, a. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Par.* vii. 138.

The soul of every brute and of each plant,  
 The ray and motion of the sacred lights,  
 Draw from complexion with meest power endued.  
 But this our life the Eternal Good inspires  
 Immediate, and enamours of itself;  
 So that our wishes rest for ever here."—*Par.* vii. 127.

"Open thy bosom to the truth that comes,  
 Know, soon as in the embryo, to the brain  
 Articulation is complete, then turns  
 The Primal Mover with a smile of joy  
 On such great work of nature; and inbreathes  
 New spirit replete with virtue, that what here  
 Active it finds, to its own substance draws;  
 And forms an individual soul,<sup>2</sup> that lives,  
 And feels, and bends reflective on itself."

—*Purg.* xxv. 69.

Owing to the essential union subsisting between the soul and the body, all our knowledge is derived from the perceptions of the senses :<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The rational soul could only have been made by creation; for as the being made (*fieri*) terminates in being, the process by which each thing is made answers to its future being. But that only is properly said to be, which has its own being or is, as it were, self-subsisting; and therefore only substances are properly called beings, and no forms not self-subsisting are, properly speaking, made, but are only so named on account of the compound subsistence which is made. But the rational soul is a self-subsisting form (v. 96), and therefore is properly said to have being, and has been made. Yet it could not have been made from pre-existing bodily matter, for then it would be corporeal; or from pre-existing spiritual matter, as then spiritual substances would be mutually transformed; and therefore it could only have been made by creation."—*S. i. q. 90, a. 2.* [A spiritual substance being distinguished from material substances, in that it can receive other forms without loss of its own.]

<sup>2</sup> "We must say that the intellectual soul, which is at the same time nutritive and sensitive, is created by God at the completion of the generation of man, when the pre-existing forms pass away."—*S. i. 118, a. 2.*

<sup>3</sup> "Our knowledge comes first from the senses, . . . which does not mean that our sense-cognition is the complete and perfect cause of our intellectual knowledge, but rather that it supplies the material of the cause."—*S. i. 84, a. 6.*

"Thus needs, that ye may apprehend, we speak:  
 Since from things sensible alone ye learn  
 That which, digested rightly, after turns  
 To intellectual."—*Par. iv. 40.*

The sense apprehends the external object, not as it is in itself, but in an image (*species intentionalis*) separated from its matter.<sup>1</sup> This sensible image excites the phantasy, "the faculty that ministers discourse to reason,"<sup>2</sup> and furnishes it with the material on which it works.<sup>3</sup> The faculty of comparing things (*discursus*) is the highest attribute of reason;<sup>4</sup> for, as St. Thomas says in the prologue to his *Ethics*, "To perceive the relation between one thing and another is the specific function of the reason. The active intellect obtains by abstraction from the image or phantasm the idea it expresses, and this idea being received by the passive or potential intellect, is inseparable from the individual soul, and not, as Averroes supposed, one and the same in all men."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Conv. iii. 9.* "The form of a stone in the mind is of a very different nature to its form in matter, but being its image, it leads us to the knowledge of the stone itself."—*Thom. de Ver. q. 8, a. 11, ad 3.*

<sup>2</sup> *Purg. xxix. 48.*

<sup>3</sup> "The active intellect (*intellectus agens*) renders the phantasms actually intelligible."—*S. i. q. 84, a. 6.*

<sup>4</sup> *Conv. iv. 8.*

<sup>5</sup> "That is ordinarily said to be passive which, being potential (or capable) of receiving a thing, receives that thing without losing any of its own pre-existing properties. In this sense everything is called passive which passes from potentiality to act, even though it acquires perfection thereby, and thus our intellect is said to be 'passible' or 'possible.'"—*S. i. q. 79, a. 2.* "Again, since Aristotle, iii. *Metaphysics*, text 10, holds that the forms of material things cannot exist without matter (and since material forms are not intelligible as such), it follows that the nature or forms of the sensible things, which we understand through the passive intellect are not themselves apprehensible. But as nothing is reduced from potentiality to act, save by some being itself in act, there must be some faculty in the intellect which renders those (forms) apprehensible, by abstracting their species from their material condition, and this faculty is the active intellect (*intellectus agens*)."—*Ibid. a. 3.* Again, as the passive intellect is not one in all men, but is rather the proper form of each man (*q. 76, a. 1*), and is therefore multi-

" . . . At this point, more wise,  
Than thou, has err'd, making the soul disjoin'd  
From passive intellect, because he saw  
No organ for the latter's use assign'd."

—*Purg.* xxv. 65.

As every work of art manifests the thought of the artist, sensible things reveal intelligible ideas, and creation visibly expresses to us the mind of God :

"Philosophy, to an attentive ear,  
Clearly points out, not in one part alone,  
How imitative Nature takes her course  
From the celestial mind, and from its art."

—*Hell*, xi. 100.

The habit of abstracting the intelligible essence from each sensible perception stores the mind with objective ideas,<sup>1</sup> by means of which we ascend from truth to truth, till we finally arrive at the knowledge of God and in Him find rest.<sup>2</sup> As has been said, every intelligence obtains a certain general knowledge of God, from the natural desire for the supreme and perfect good.<sup>3</sup> As Providence impels every creature to seek its proper perfection, all men by nature desire knowledge, in which the perfection of the soul consists. Wisdom is the true bread of angels, for it makes happy those who taste it. The first principles of our knowledge are self-evident truths,<sup>4</sup> and require no demonstration.<sup>5</sup>

plied with each human body, so neither is the active intellect one in all men." He further shows (a. 2), from the diversity of intellectual operations in men, that the soul, the principle of these operations, cannot be one and the same in all men.—*S.* i. q. 79, a. 1.

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* xviii. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Plato compares the intellectual progress of the soul towards the knowledge of God, and the effort it entails, to the vision of a man, who having been imprisoned under-ground, is dragged up a steep ascent and forced to gaze on the light. At first he sees shadows, next the reflection of objects in the water, then the objects themselves; finally, he can look upon the sun itself as it is in its own proper place, and even contemplate its nature. *Republic*, Bk. vii.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* xvii. 124.

<sup>4</sup> *Aristot. Top.* i. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Par.* ii. 45.

The highest good which God has bestowed on any creatures is free-will, by which they resemble Himself :

“Supreme of gifts, which God, creating, gave  
Of His free bounty, sign most evident  
Of goodness, and in His account most prized,  
Was liberty of will ; the boon wherewith  
All intellectual creatures, and them sole,  
He hath endowed.”—*Par.* v. 18.

Consequently the stars cannot interfere with this freedom :

“If then the present race of mankind err,  
Seek in yourselves the cause, and find it there.  
Herein thou shalt confess me no false spy.”  
—*Purg.* xvi. 83.

The human soul naturally desires the good and the true, and is attracted by error and sin only when these wear the garb of truth and goodness :<sup>1</sup>

“I well discern,  
How in thine intellect already shines  
The light eternal, which to view alone  
Ne'er fails to kindle love ; and if aught else  
Your love seduces, 'tis but that it shows  
Some ill-mark'd vestige of that primal beam.”

—*Par.* v. 6.

One glance at the misery which springs from evil should suffice to deliver the soul from false allurements, and urge it to fly towards the glory offered to it :

<sup>1</sup> “As the intellect has a natural knowledge of first principles, so the will by the force of its nature desires the end, . . . for every man by nature desires happiness, and from this natural desire spring all other desires ; for whatever a man desires, he desires for an end. The love, therefore, of good, which man naturally desires, is a natural love, but the love which springs from it (for this or that object) is an elective love.”—*S.* i. q. 60, a. 2. “Evil can never be loved for its own sake, but only in order to avoid another evil, or obtain some other good.”—*S.* i. 2. q. 78, a. 1 ad 2.



"Hast thou seen, said he,  
That old enchantress, her, whose wiles alone  
The spirits o'er us weep for? Hast thou seen  
How man may free him of her bonds? Enough!  
Let thy heels spurn the earth; and thy raised ken  
Fix on the lure, which Heaven's Eternal King  
Whirls in the rolling spheres."—*Purg.* xix. 57.

Through the voluntary resistance which, aided by divine grace, the soul offers to the seduction of earthly things, it gains its moral freedom :

"Light have ye still to follow evil or good,  
And of the will free power, which, if it stand  
Firm and unwearied in Heaven's first assay,  
Conquers at last, so it be cherish'd well,  
Triumphant over all. To mightier force,  
To better nature subject, ye abide  
Free, not constrain'd by that which forms in you  
The reasoning mind uninfluenced of the stars."

—*Purg.* xvi. 75.

In proportion as sinful tendencies are eradicated, the practice of virtue becomes easier :

"Then shall thy feet by heartiness of will  
Be so o'ercome, they not alone shall feel  
No sense of labour, but delight much more  
Shall wait them, urged along their upward way."

—*Purg.* xii. 116.

The rational soul is the substantial form of the body, and is separated from it by death. The sensitive faculties are only virtually present in the departed soul, whilst the spiritual powers become more vigorous and perfect.<sup>1</sup> Death decides man's lot for eternity :

<sup>1</sup> "The soul is the one principle of all its faculties. But certain faculties, as the mind and will, inhere in it alone as their subject, and these necessarily remain in it after the body is destroyed. Other faculties, such as the sensitive and nutritive, have for their subject

"When Lachesis hath spun the thread, the soul  
 Takes with her both the human and divine,  
 Memory, intelligence, and will, in act  
 Far keener than before; the other powers  
 Inactive all and mute. No pause allow'd,  
 In wondrous sort self-moving, to one strand  
 Of those, where the departed roam, she falls:  
 Here learns her destined path."—*Purg.* xxv. 81.

Dramatic reasons induced Dante to represent the soul as united to an ethereal body,<sup>1</sup> as the shadow of the soul's emotions "with each sense, even to the sight, endued."<sup>2</sup> After the day of judgment all souls are re-united to their own bodies. The resurrection of the body, and its future incorruptibility, follows from the fact that Adam's body was immediately created by God:

"And hence thou may'st by inference conclude  
 Our resurrection certain, if thy mind  
 Consider how the human flesh was framed,  
 When both our parents at the first were made."  
 —*Par.* vii. 141.

Only in union with his fellows can man fully develop reason, his highest gift. Society is a divine institution, and the authority of its chief, the Emperor, is from God:<sup>3</sup>

"He straight rejoin'd: 'Say, were it worse for man,  
 If he lived not in fellowship on earth?'  
 'Yea,' answer'd I; 'nor here a reason needs.'  
 —*Par.* viii. 120.

the being composed of body and soul. And as an accident cannot remain when the subject ceases to be, these faculties, after the body is destroyed, remain in the soul not actually but only virtually, as in their principle or root."—*S. i. q. 77, a. 8.*

<sup>1</sup> *S. iii. Supp. q. 69, a. 1*; *Civ. Dei*, xxi. 10; *Conv.* ii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* xxv. 99.

<sup>3</sup> *Conv.* iv. 4; *De Monarch.* i. 5; *Thom. De Regim. Princip.* i. 1, 2.

"That thou well may'st mark,  
What reason on each side they have to plead,  
By whom that holiest banner is withstood,  
Both who pretend its power and who oppose."

—*Par.* vi. 30.

The first man was immediately created by God :

"O fruit! that wast alone  
Mature, when first engender'd; ancient father!  
That doubly seest in every wedded bride  
Thy daughter, by affinity and blood."—*Par.* xxvi. 89.

Adam is the only man who never had a mother or tasted mother's milk, and knew neither childhood nor youth.<sup>1</sup> Eve was framed from his side. The traditions of the golden age, sung by heathen poets, have their source in mystic visions of Paradise, where man lived in innocence, and the trees bore at once flowers and fruit :

"They, whose verse of yore  
The golden age recorded, and its bliss,  
On the Parnassian mountain, of this place  
Perhaps had dream'd. Here was man guiltless; here  
Perpetual spring, and every fruit; and this  
The far-famed nectar."—*Purg.* xxviii. 145.

Neither angels nor beasts require external speech. The former impart their ideas to each other directly, and see all things as in a mirror, in God. Beasts have no need of speech, for they are wholly guided by natural instinct. But man is led by reason, and as he cannot communicate directly with others, he must find external expression for his thoughts.<sup>2</sup> God gave man the power of speech, and left the particular form to be determined by himself :<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *De Vulgar. Eloqu.* i. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *De Vulgar. Eloqu.* i. 1-3.

<sup>3</sup> Dante here retracts his earlier opinion on this subject, that God had also created, together with man, his language, the actual words, grammar and tone.—*De Vulgar. Eloqu.* i. 6, 7.

"That he speaks  
Is nature's prompting: whether thus, or thus,  
She leaves to you, as ye do most affect it."

—*Par.* xxvi. 129.

Man was created in justice and immortality, in the image of the Divine Holiness. By his own fault he forfeited Paradise, and therewith his claim to eternal bliss:<sup>1</sup>

"The First Good, whose joy  
Is only in Himself, created man  
For happiness; and gave this goodly place,  
His pledge and earnest of eternal peace.  
Favour'd thus highly, through his own defect  
He fell: and here made short sojourn; he fell,  
And, for the bitterness of sorrow, changed  
Laughter unblamed and ever-new delight."

—*Purg.* xxviii. 91.

Satan out of envy seduced our first parents. Their fall was occasioned, not by the fruit they ate, but by their eating it in disobedience to the divine command.<sup>2</sup> They<sup>3</sup> were only seven hours in Paradise:<sup>4</sup>

"Upon the mount  
Most high above the waters, all my life,  
Both innocent and guilty, did but reach  
From the first hour, to that which cometh next  
(As the sun changes quarter) to the sixth."

—*Par.* xxvi. 137.

God in His mercy had imposed a restraint on the con-

<sup>1</sup> S. i. q. 95, a. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The sin of Adam was pride; his disobedience was its consequence. "Adam did not disobey the divine precept, from mere wilful disobedience; for such a motive presupposes an already disordered will. . . . What he first willed inordinately was his own excellence, and thus his disobedience sprang from his pride."—S. ii. 2. q. 163, a. 1 ad 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Par.* xxvi. 114.

<sup>4</sup> Dante here follows the Greek Fathers (Irenæus, Cyril of Antioch, Epiphanius, &c.) The Latins (August., Amb., Basil) allow Adam a longer sojourn in Paradise. Cf. Perer. in *Genes.* 3, 23.

cupiscence of man, to which he refused to submit, and his fall followed. All mankind sinned and was condemned in Adam, as the representative of the human race :

“Through suffering not a curb<sup>1</sup> upon the power  
That will’d in him, to his own profiting,  
That man, who was unborn, condemn’d himself ;  
And, in himself, all who since him have lived,  
His offspring : whence, below, the human kind  
Lay sick in grievous error many an age.”

—*Par.* vii. 23.

The flesh of Adam, of which we all partake, impedes our progress in virtue,<sup>2</sup> and drags us back to earth when we would rise to higher things :

“O ye race of men,  
Though born to soar, why suffer ye a wind  
So slight to baffle ye ?”—*Purg.* xii. 88.

It is this universal depravity which prevents good intentions in individuals from bearing their proper fruit :

“The will in man  
Bears goodly blossoms ; but its ruddy promise  
Is, by the dripping of perpetual rain,  
Made mere abortion.”—*Par.* xxvii. 115.

<sup>1</sup> “The schoolmen named that supernatural grace of original justice which subjected the senses to the reason, *fratum concupiscentia*.”—August. *Op. imperf. c. Jul. c. 70* ; S. i. q. 105, a. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* xi. 43.

## CHAPTER IX.

## REDEMPTION AND JUSTIFICATION.

GOD might have redeemed man, either by granting him in His mercy a free pardon, or by demanding in His justice the satisfaction due for sin. But this last was beyond man's power; for by no depth of humiliation could he ever atone for the outrage his pride had offered to the Divine Majesty.<sup>1</sup> In the sacrifice of His Son, then, God satisfied alike His justice and mercy: His justice, by the satisfaction offered by the Man Christ Jesus for man's sin; His mercy, in delivering His only-begotten Son to die for man's redemption:

“To dignity thus lost  
Is no return; unless, where guilt makes void,  
He for ill pleasure pay with equal pain.  
Your nature, which entirely in its seed

<sup>1</sup> “By no necessity was Christ forced to suffer, either on the part of God, Who decreed that He should suffer, or of Christ, Who voluntarily endured His passion.”—S. iii. q. 46, a. 1. “His omnipotence might have effected it in many other ways.”—S. iii. q. 1, a. 2.

“No satisfaction offered by mere man could suffice for Adam's sin, both because all human nature was corrupted by that sin, and because the value of no single man, nor of any number of men, could compensate for the loss inflicted on the whole race. Again, the sin being committed against God, had a certain infinite character, because of the infinity of the Divine Majesty; for the gravity of an offence is proportioned to the rank of the person outraged; whence condign satisfaction needed that the act of the person offering it should be of infinite value.”—S. iii. q. 1, a. 2 ad 2.

Transgress'd, from these distinctions fell, no less  
 Than from its state in Paradise ; nor means  
 Found of recovery (search all methods out  
 As strictly as thou may) save one of these,  
 The only fords were left through which to wade :  
 Either, that God had of His courtesy  
 Released him merely ; or else, man himself  
 For his own folly by himself atoned.  
 Fix now thine eye, intently as thou canst,  
 On the everlasting counsel ; and explore,  
 Instructed by my words, the dread abyss.  
 Man in himself had ever lack'd the means  
 Of satisfaction, for he could not stoop  
 Obeying, in humility so low,  
 As high he, disobeying, sought to soar :  
 And, for this reason, he had vainly tried  
 Out of his own sufficiency, to pay  
 The rigid satisfaction. Then behoved  
 That God should by His own ways<sup>1</sup> lead him back  
 Unto the life, from whence he fell, restored :  
 By both His ways, I mean, or one alone.  
 But since the deed is ever prized the more  
 The more the doer's good intent appears ;  
 Goodness celestial, whose broad signature  
 Is on the universe, of all its ways,  
 To raise ye up, was fain to leave out none.  
 Nor aught so vast or so magnificent,  
 Either for him who gave or who received,  
 Between the last night and the primal day,  
 Was or can be. For God more bounty show'd,  
 Giving Himself to make man capable  
 Of his return to life, than had the terms  
 Been mere and unconditional release.

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<sup>1</sup> "The redemption of man by the Passion of Christ was suitable both to His justice and mercy. His justice, since by His Passion Christ satisfied for the sin of man, who was thus redeemed by the justice of Christ ; His mercy, since as man alone could not satisfy for the sin of our whole human nature, God gave His Son in satisfaction (Rom. iii. 24) ; and this was an act of more abundant mercy than a free forgiveness (Ephes. ii. 4)."—S. iii. q. 46, a. 1.

And for His justice, every method else  
Were all too scant, had not the Son of God  
Humbled Himself to put on mortal flesh."

—*Par.* vii. 78.

The death of the Cross, which our human nature suffered in Christ, considered in itself, was the just punishment for sin, but most unjust as regards the Divine Person by Whom our humanity was assumed :

"Ne'er then was penalty so just as that  
Inflicted by the Cross, if thou regard  
The nature in assumption doom'd ; ne'er wrong  
So great, in reference to Him, Who took  
Such nature on Him, and endured the doom.<sup>1</sup>  
For by one death God and the Jews were pleased ;  
And Heaven was open'd, though the earth did quake."

—*Par.* vii. 39.

The mystery of the Incarnation is as much beyond our comprehension as that of the Trinity, and can only by divine illumination be even partially understood :

"Thou smiledst, on that circling, which in thee  
Seem'd as reflected splendour, while I mused ;  
For I therein, methought, in its own hue  
Beheld our image painted : steadfastly  
I therefore pored upon the view. As one  
Who, versed in geometric lore, would fain  
Measure the circle ; and, though pondering long  
And deeply, that beginning which he needs,  
Finds not ; e'en such was I, intent to scan  
The novel wonder, and trace out the form,  
How to the circle fitted, and therein  
How placed : but the flight was not for my wing ;

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<sup>1</sup> "Since from the moment of His conception the soul of Christ was united to the Divinity, and is the one source of grace to all who possess it, the fulness of all the graces was necessarily in His soul."—*S.* iii. q. 7, a. 9.



Had not a flash darted athwart my mind,  
And, in the spleen, unfolded what it sought."

—*Par.* xxxiii. 118.

The birth of the Son of God in human flesh is the work of the Holy Ghost, the Eternal Love :<sup>1</sup>

"Until it pleased the Word of God to come  
Amongst them down, to His own person joining  
The nature from its Maker far estranged,  
By the mere act of His eternal love."—*Par.* vii. 29.

The Archangel Gabriel announced to Mary, that the Incarnation would establish peace between God and the sinful world :

"The angel who came down to earth  
With tidings of the peace so many years  
Wept for in vain, that oped the heavenly gates  
From their long interdict."—*Purg.* x. 31.

"He that bare the palm  
Down unto Mary, when the Son of God  
Vouchsafed to clothe Him in terrestrial weeds."

—*Par.* xxxii. 100.

"She was imaged there,  
By whom the key did open to God's love."

—*Purg.* x. 37.

Although in Christ the Divine Person united Himself to human nature, yet the two natures, the divine and the human, remain perfectly distinct :

"Or e'er that work engaged me, I did hold  
In Christ one nature only ; with such faith  
Contented. But the blessed Agapete,<sup>2</sup>  
Who was chief shepherd, he with warning voice  
To the true faith recall'd me."—*Par.* vi. 14.

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Agapetus I., in 536, at Constantinople, refused, in the presence of Justinian and Theodora, to admit the Eutychian Patriarch Anthimus to communion until he had abjured his heresy. Cf. *Mansi, Collect. Conc.* viii. 873.

Christ chose poverty as His earthly bride, and it ascended the Cross with Him, when even Mary remained at its foot.<sup>1</sup> For love of our salvation our Lord hung upon the Cross, and even joyfully endured the anguish of the dereliction.<sup>2</sup> He is the Lamb of God, Who takes away our sins.<sup>3</sup> He was mocked, drank of the gall and vinegar, and was crucified between two thieves;<sup>4</sup> His death was compassed by violence and hypocrisy. Therefore when He died, an earthquake shook that chasm in Hell where the violent and hypocrites are punished :

“ Know then, that when I erst  
Hither descended to the nether Hell,  
This rock was not yet fallen. But past doubt,  
(If well I mark) not long ere He arrived,  
Who carried off from Dis the mighty spoil  
Of the highest circle, then through all its bounds  
Such trembling seized the deep concave and foul,  
I thought the universe was thrill'd with love,  
Whereby, there are who deem, the world hath oft  
Been into chaos turn'd.”—*Hell*, xii. 33.

Victor over death, the Soul of Christ, after the Crucifixion, descended into the outer court of Hell, and brought thence the faithful of the Old Covenant; who were to ascend with Him, when He opened the gates of Heaven.

This Virgil saw and thus relates :

“ I was new to that estate,  
When I beheld a Puissant One arrive  
Amongst us, with victorious trophy crown'd.  
He forth the shade of our first parent drew,  
Abel his child, and Noah righteous man,  
Of Moses lawgiver for faith approved,  
Of patriarch Abraham, and David king,  
Israel, with his sire and with his sons,

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* xi. 66.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* xxiii. 67.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* xvi. 16.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* xx. 86.

Nor without Rachel whom so hard he won,  
And others many more, whom He to bliss  
Exalted. Before these, be thou assured,  
No spirit of human kind was ever saved."

—*Hell*, iv. 49.

That same Human Nature in which He had loved and  
suffered, Christ took with Him into Heaven :

"For I therein, methought, in its own hue  
Beheld our image painted."—*Par.* xxxiii. 120.

We now pass on to the ever-blessed Mary, Mother of  
God. No name is so often repeated as

"The name  
Of that fair flower, whom duly I invoke  
Both morn and eve."<sup>1</sup>—*Par.* xxxiii. 85.

Mary typifies the divine mercy. At her intercession, as we have seen, the vision of the three kingdoms<sup>2</sup> was vouchsafed to the poet. In Purgatory she appears in a variety of aspects, as the help of Christians and the prototype of the seven virtues, which are there contrasted with the seven mortal sins. Buonconte of Montefeltro, who was wounded in the battle of Campaldino, relates how he was saved at Mary's intercession :

"There came I,  
Pierced in the throat, fleeing away on foot,

<sup>1</sup> Dante alludes to the ringing of the Angelus, night and morning. This devotion was introduced into the Church by Gregory IX. in 1239.

<sup>2</sup> But neither the name of Mary, nor the Holy Name of Christ, are ever uttered in Hell. "No man can say the Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. xii. 3). Thus, in the first cantos of the *Inferno*, the name of our Lord is always paraphrased. He is called "a Puissant One" (*Hell*, iv. 50); "the Man, that was born sinless and so lived" (*Hell*, xxxiv. 110); "Who carried off from Dis the mighty spoil" (*Hell*, xii. 37). And Mary is "Donna gentil nel ciel," a blessed lady who in Heaven resides (*Hell*, ii. 94).

And bloodying the plain. Here sight and speech  
 Fail'd me; and finishing with Mary's name,  
 I fell, and tenantless my flesh remain'd.  
 I will report the truth; which thou again  
 Tell to the living. Me God's angel took,  
 Whilst he of Hell exclaim'd, 'O thou from Heaven,  
 Say, wherefore hast thou robb'd me? Thou of him  
 The eternal portion bear'st with thee away,  
 For one poor tear that he deprives me of.'<sup>1</sup>

—*Purg.* v. 95.

Dante beholds the penitent spirits seated amid the flowers of the valley, and hears them intone the "Salve Regina,"<sup>2</sup> fitting canticle for the vale of tears. Supplicating cries of "Blessed Mary, pray for us," "Dolce Maria, O sweet Mary," resound through Purgatory. Her humility is set before the suffering souls in a marble representation of the mystery of the Annunciation:

"The angel who came down to earth  
 With tidings of the peace so many years  
 Wept for in vain, that oped the heavenly gates  
 From their long interdict, before us seem'd  
 In a sweet act, so sculptured to the life,  
 He look'd no silent image. One had sworn  
 He had said 'Hail!' for she was imaged there,  
 By whom the key did open to God's love;  
 And in her act, as sensibly imprest  
 That word, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord!'  
 As figure sealed on wax."—*Purg.* x. 31.

The envious are admonished by voices, recalling to their memories instances of her tender charity:

<sup>1</sup> [As Buonconte died externally under censure, his body was deprived of Christian burial, and in that sense belonged to the Devil, but "una lagrimetta" with Mary's name saved his soul.

"Thou robbest me of his eternal soul  
 For that one tear of penitence shed;  
 But what remains is under my control."

—*Wright.*]

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* vii. 52.

"The voice that first flew by, call'd forth aloud,  
 'They have no wine,' so on behind us past,  
 Those sounds reiterating."—*Purg.* xiii. 25.

To the passionate, visions of her patience are sent :

"There suddenly I seem'd  
 By an ecstatic vision wrapt away ;  
 And in a temple saw, methought, a crowd  
 Of many persons ; and at the entrance stood  
 A Dame, whose sweet demeanour did express  
 A mother's love, who said, ' Child ! why hast thou  
 Dealt with us thus ? Behold thy sire and I  
 Sorrowing have sought thee ; ' and so held her peace."  
 —*Purg.* xv. 83.

The slothful recall how "blessed Mary sought with haste  
 the hilly region ;" <sup>1</sup> the covetous cry out with shame :

"O blessed Virgin ! . . .  
 . . . . . how poor  
 Thou wast, . . . . . witness that low roof  
 Where thou didst lay thy sacred burden down."  
 —*Purg.* xx. 21.

To the intemperate a voice calls out of the mystic tree :

"Mary took more thought<sup>2</sup>  
 For joy and honour of the nuptial feast,  
 Than for herself, who answers now for you."  
 —*Purg.* xxii. 139.

Amid their flames the unchaste sing the Breviary hymn,  
 "Summæ Deus Clementiæ," and then in full accord intone  
 Mary's response to the angel, "Virum non cognosco," as a  
 mutual incentive to purity.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* xviii. 98.

<sup>2</sup> This is an instance of both her example and her intercession.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* xxv. 123 (Luke i. 34). St. Bonaventure contrasts the seven virtues of Mary with the seven deadly sins. "Mary alone was free from every vice, and shone with every virtue. To pride, she opposed

One of the grandest passages in the *Commedia* is that descriptive of the appearance of the Serpent in Purgatory, and his instantaneous flight at Mary's prayer. Dante sees a soul with hands folded in prayer, and eyes fixed upon the eastern sky :

"'Te Lucis ante,'<sup>1</sup> so devoutly then  
Came from its lip, and in so soft a strain,  
That all my sense in ravishment was lost.  
And the rest after, softly and devout,  
Follow'd through all the hymn, with upward gaze  
Directed to the bright supernal wheels.

I saw that gentle band silently next  
Look up, as if in expectation held,  
Pale and in lowly guise; and from on high,  
I saw, forth issuing descend beneath,  
Two angels, with two flame-illuminated swords,  
Broken and mutilated of their points.  
Green as the tender leaves but newly born,  
Their vesture was, the which, by wings as green  
Beaten, they drew behind them, fann'd in air.  
A little over us one took his stand;  
The other lighted on the opposing hill;  
So that the troop were in the midst contain'd.

'From Mary's bosom' both  
Are come,' exclaim'd Sordello, 'as a guard  
Over the vale,' 'gainst him who hither tends,  
The serpent.'—*Purg.* viii. 13, 22, 37.

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humility most lowly; to envy, charity most loving; to sloth, diligence most unwearied; to anger, meekness most gentle; to avarice, poverty most straitened; to gluttony, sobriety most temperate; to sensuality, virginity most chaste."—*Speculum B. M. V.* Lect. iv.

<sup>1</sup> Compline Hymn in the Breviary, to which follows the prayer: "Visit, we beseech Thee, O Lord, this habitation, and drive far from it all snares of the enemy; let Thy holy angels dwell herein, to preserve us in peace."

<sup>2</sup> The symbol of maternal tenderness.

<sup>3</sup> "In this vale of tears."—*Antiphon, Salve Regina.*



"And, as the bright dimensions of the star<sup>1</sup>  
 In Heaven excelling, as once here on earth,  
 Were in my eyeballs lively pourtray'd;<sup>2</sup>  
 Lo! from within the sky a cresset fell,  
 Circling in fashion of a diadem;  
 And girt the star; and, hovering, round it wheel'd.  
 Whatever melody sounds sweetest here,  
 And draws the spirit most unto itself,  
 Might seem a rent cloud, when it grates the thunder;  
 Compared unto the sounding of that lyre,  
 Wherewith the goodliest sapphire,<sup>3</sup> that inlays  
 The floor of Heaven, was crowned. 'Angelic Love  
 I am, who thus with hovering flight enwheel  
 The lofty rapture from that womb inspired,  
 Where our desire did dwell; and round thee so,  
 Lady of Heaven! will hover; long as thou  
 Thy Son shalt follow, and diviner joy  
 Shall from thy presence gild the highest sphere.'  
 Such close was to the circling melody:  
 And as it ended, all the other lights  
 Took up the strain, and echoed Mary's name.

And like to babe, that stretches forth its arms  
 For very eagerness toward the breast,  
 After the milk is taken; so outstretch'd  
 Their wavy summits all the fervent band,  
 Through zealous love to Mary; then, in view  
 They halted; and 'Regina Cœli' sang  
 So sweetly, the delight hath left me never."

—*Par.* xxiii. 89.

Again Gabriel is the angel

"That with such glee  
 Beholds our Queen, and so enamour'd glows  
 Of her high beauty, that all fire he seems."

—*Par.* xxxii. 91.

<sup>1</sup> "Ave Maris stella."—*Hymn Eccl.*

<sup>2</sup> Of the infinite excellence of the Divine Maternity see footnote 5, p. 298.

<sup>3</sup> In Christian art, Mary wears a blue garment.



So again :

"And he, who had to her descended once  
On earth, now hail'd in Heaven ; and on poised wing,  
'Ave Maria, gratia plena,' sang :  
To whose sweet anthem all the blissful court,  
From all parts answering, rang : that holier joy  
Brooded the deep serene."—*Par.* xxxii. 83.

Arrived at the end of his pilgrimage, the poet beholds the "snow white Rose" of the blessed,<sup>1</sup> who enjoy the Beatific Vision. Right and left, in ascending concentric circles, sit the glorified spirits of the Old and New Covenants. Enthroned on high, far above all the rest, Mary appears. Peter is seated at her right hand, Adam on the left,—the two roots of the celestial rose, both supremely blest because "on each hand next our Empress throned."

Immediately below Mary, in the second row of petals, is Eve :

"The wound that Mary closed, she open'd first,<sup>2</sup>  
Who sits so beautiful at Mary's feet."—*Par.* xxxii. 3.

Facing Peter sits Anne, the blessed mother of the most Blessed Virgin :

"So well content to look  
On her loved daughter, that with moveless eye  
She chants the loud Hosanna."—*Par.* xxxii. 119.

All who dwell here are subjects of Mary, "the Queen, that of this realm is sovran,"<sup>3</sup> and the source of the light which illumines it :

"Straight mine eyes I raised ; and bright,  
As, at the birth of morn, the Eastern clime  
Above the horizon, where the sun declines ;

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* xxxi. 1.

<sup>2</sup> "Eve wounded, Mary healed."—*Aug. Serm. Spur.* cxx. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Par.* xxxi. 108.

So to mine eyes, that upward, as from vale  
To mountain sped, at the extreme bound, a part  
Excell'd in lustre all the front opposed.

So burn'd the peaceful oriflamme,<sup>1</sup> and slack'd  
On every side the living flame decay'd.  
And in that midst their sportive pennons waved  
Thousands of angels; in resplendence each  
Distinct, and quaint adornment. At their glee  
And carol, smiled the Lovely One of Heaven,  
That joy was in the eyes of all the blest."

—*Par.* xxxi. 109.

But her beauty surpasses all power of description :

"Had I a tongue in eloquence as rich,  
As is the colouring in fancy's loom,  
'Twere all too poor to utter the least part  
Of that enchantment."—*Par.* xxxi. 126.

So radiant is the body of Mary, which by special privilege<sup>2</sup> was permitted to enter into glory with the Body of her Son, before the general resurrection.<sup>3</sup> Mary is the highest in the Church Triumphant, that "saintly army, which in His own Blood Christ espoused;"<sup>4</sup> the gracious Bride "who with the lance and nails was won;"<sup>5</sup> "the beautiful garden, blossoming beneath the rays of Christ;"<sup>6</sup> "the Rose, wherein the Word Divine was made incarnate."<sup>7</sup>

Encouraged by "her faithful Bernard,"<sup>8</sup> the poet turns through him to Mary, "whose might can help thee,"<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The name of the French banner, "aurea flamma," said to have been the winding-sheet of St. Denis, to which was ascribed a special virtue. Mary is the banner under which the Church wins her victories. See Fleury, *H. E.* xv. 74, 25.

<sup>2</sup> "That some have been permitted to rise in their bodies before the general resurrection is by a special privilege of grace."—S. iii. Supp. q. 77, a. 1 ad 2. "And many bodies of the saints which slept arose."—*Matt.* xxvii. 52.

<sup>4</sup> *Par.* xxxi. 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Par.* xxxii. 114.

<sup>3</sup> *Par.* xxv. 127.

<sup>6</sup> *Par.* xxiii. 70.

<sup>7</sup> *Par.* xxiii. 71.

<sup>8</sup> *Par.* xxxi. 93.

<sup>9</sup> *Par.* xxxii. 133.

imploing grace to reach the goal, and power to gaze on the Primal Love.<sup>1</sup> And then St. Bernard commences that saintly orison to which Dante, "attending with affection while he sues," yields all his heart.<sup>2</sup> St. Bernard, who had written, "Dost thou want an advocate with Christ? fly to Mary. Never doubt that the Son will hear His Mother. The Son hears the Mother, the Father the Son. This is the ladder by which the sinner climbs to God. On this I trust; on this rests all my hope."<sup>3</sup> And now the Saint prays:

"O Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son!  
Created beings all in lowliness  
Surpassing, as in height above them all;  
Term by the eternal council pre-ordain'd;  
Ennobler of thy nature, so advanced  
In thee, that its great Maker did not scorn,  
To make Himself His own creation;  
For in thy womb rekindling shone the love  
Reveal'd, whose genial influence makes now  
This flower to germin in eternal peace:<sup>4</sup>  
Here thou to us, of charity and love,  
Art, as the noonday torch; and art, beneath,  
To mortal men, of hope a living spring.  
So mighty art thou, Lady, and so great,  
That he, who grace desireth, and comes not  
To thee for aidance, fain would have desire  
Fly without wings. Not only him who asks,  
Thy bounty succours; but doth freely oft  
Forerun the asking. Whatso'er may be  
Of excellence in creature, pity mild,  
Relenting mercy, large munificence,  
Are all combined in thee."<sup>5</sup>—*Par.* xxxiii. 1.

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<sup>1</sup> *Par.* xxxii. 128.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.* xxxii. 135. :

<sup>3</sup> In Nativit. B. M. V. Serm. de Aquaed.

<sup>4</sup> Mary is the Mother of Christ, from Whose merits and grace the heavenly rose, the company of the elect, has sprung.

<sup>5</sup> "The Son gives an infinite value to the goodness of His Mother."  
—*Albert M. in Mariali, super missus est*, q. 197, t. xx. 139. At the

St. Bernard's more especial request for the poet is, that Mary will obtain for him :

"Virtue yet more high, to lift his ken  
Toward the bliss supreme, . . . .  
. . . . That on the sovran joy  
Unveil'd he gaze."—*Par.* xxxiii. 26.

Nevertheless, Dante must return to the world, to the dark forest in which he had lost his way. Hence St. Bernard asks for him God's highest grace, the gift of perseverance.<sup>1</sup> Beatrice and all the saints unite in the request :

"This yet I pray thee, Queen,  
Who canst do what thou wilt; that in him thou  
Wouldst, after all he hath beheld, preserve  
Affection sound, and human passions quell.  
Lo! where, with Beatrice, many a saint  
Stretch their clasped hands, in futherance of my suit."<sup>2</sup>  
—*Par.* xxxiii. 33.

seventh Council of Nice (Act iv. Hard. iv. p. 242), St. Germanus declared, "We honour her as the Mother of God, who is exalted above all creatures, visible and invisible."

<sup>1</sup> This grace, which cannot be merited, but may be impetrated by our prayers and those of the saints, is given only to the elect. "God willed that after the Fall, only by His grace should man be able to advance towards Him, and again, the gift of not falling away He reserved to His grace alone."—*Aug. De Don. Persev.* c. 6. "Suppliciter emereri potest," c. 13. "Grant, we beseech thee, that we may experience her intercession for us, through whom we have deserved to receive the Author of life, our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son."—*Prayer, Antiphon from Christmas to the Purification.*

<sup>2</sup> "Donna, se' tanto grande, e tanto vali,  
Che qual vuol grazia, e a te non ricorre,  
Sua distanza vuol volar senz'ali.  
La tua benignità non pur soccorre  
A chi dimanda, ma molte fiate  
Liberamente al dimandar precorre.  
In te misericordia, in te pietate,  
In te magnificenza, in te s'aduna  
Quantunque in creatura è di bontate."  
—*Par.* xxxiii. 13.

Truly this prayer in its simplicity and grandeur, in its childlike piety, its depth and unction, breathes the very spirit of St. Bernard. His suit is lovingly granted :

“The eyes, that Heaven with love and awe regards,  
Fix'd on the suitor, witness'd, how benign  
She looks on pious prayers : then fasten'd they  
On the Everlasting Light, wherein no eye  
Of creature, as may well be thought, so far  
Can travel inward.”—*Par.* xxxiii. 39.

Next come before us the Christian virtues, the first of which is faith. No system of philosophy, no human teacher, not even Plato, Aristotle, or Virgil, but faith alone can satisfy man's innate yearning for truth.<sup>1</sup> Faith in Christ, whether as hoped for or as already come, is the source and essential condition of justification :

“None ever hath ascended to this realm,  
Who hath not a believer been in Christ,  
Either before or after the blest Limbs  
Were nail'd upon the wood.”—*Par.* xix. 101.

But faith concealed within the soul is insufficient, as Statius thus declares :

“I was baptized : but secretly, through fear,  
Remain'd a Christian, and conform'd long time  
To Pagan rites. Four centuries and more,  
I, for that lukewarmness, was fain to pace  
Round the fourth circle.”—*Purg.* xxii. 89.

Our faith must be proved by our actions, or the very heathen will condemn us :

“But lo! of those  
Who call ‘Christ, Christ,’ there shall be many found,  
In judgment, farther off from Him by far,  
Than such to whom His Name was never known.

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<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* iii. 37.

Christians like these the Ethiop shall condemn :  
When that the two assemblages shall part ;  
One rich eternally, the other poor."—*Par.* xix. 104.

This faith is a jewel, the corner-stone of all the virtues :<sup>1</sup>

"The costly jewel on the which  
Is founded every virtue."—*Par.* xxiv. 88.

Faith is "the entrance<sup>2</sup> to salvation's way,"<sup>3</sup> which  
"peopled this fair realm with citizens,"<sup>4</sup> and without which  
good deeds suffice not.<sup>5</sup>

The opposite of faith is heresy, which often springs from  
a vain endeavour to fathom the divine mysteries ; and as  
these are impenetrable, the heretic in his stubbornness  
rejects what should be humbly accepted :<sup>6</sup>

"That to the eye of man our justice seems  
Unjust, is argument for faith, and not  
For heretic declension."—*Par.* iv. 67.

Another source of heresy is pride, for a proud man  
disdains to retract an opinion rashly expressed :

"Since it befalls, that in most instances  
Current opinion leans to false, and then  
Affection binds the judgment to her ply."  
—*Par.* xiii. 113.

<sup>1</sup> "Faith is first of all the virtues. For as the end is the principle of every action, the theological virtues, whose object is the last end, must precede the others. But the last end is in the intellect prior to the will, which is only impelled to any object as far as the intellect apprehends it. And since it is by faith that the last end is apprehended by the intellect, faith must be the first of all the virtues."—*S.* ii. 2. q. 4. a. 7.

<sup>2</sup> "We are therefore said to be justified by faith, as faith is the beginning of man's salvation, the foundation and the root of all justification, without which it is impossible to please God."—*Conc. Trid.* Sess. vi. cap. 8 ; *Bonav. De Sept. Donis Sp.* § vi. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Hell*, ii. 32.

<sup>4</sup> *Par.* xxiv. 44.

<sup>5</sup> *Par.* xxii. 61.

<sup>6</sup> "I am certain that if I made any statement which was clearly contradicted by the Sacred Scriptures, that statement would be false ; nor knowingly would I hold it."—*Anselm, Cur Deus Homo*, i. 18 ; *Thom. Cont. Gent.* i. 7 ; *Aug. Ep.* 143 ; *Gen. ad Lit.* i. 18.

Love of notoriety and of appearing original are also fruitful causes of heresy, which travesties and misinterprets Scripture :

"Each the known track of sage philosophy  
Deserts, and has a byway of his own :  
So much the restless eagerness to shine,  
And love of singularity, prevail.  
Yet this, offensive as it is, provokes  
Heaven's anger less, than when the Book of God  
Is forced to yield to man's authority,  
Or from its straightness warp'd : no reckoning made  
What blood the sowing of it in the world  
Has cost ; what favour for himself he wins,  
Who meekly clings to it. The aim of all  
Is how to shine : e'en they, whose office is  
To preach the gospel, let the gospel sleep,  
And pass their own inventions off instead."

—*Par.* xxix. 89.

All light of faith comes from above, but darkness from the flesh :

"Light is none,  
Save that which cometh from the pure serene  
Of ne'er disturbed ether : for the rest,  
'Tis darkness all ; or shadow of the flesh,  
Or else its poison."—*Par.* xix. 59.

Again, the false doctrines of heretics are like swords, which mutilate the Scriptures and reflect a distorted image.<sup>1</sup> Hence heresiarchs and their followers are buried in red-hot tombs :<sup>2</sup>

"The arch-heretics are here, accompanied  
By every sect their followers ; and much more,  
Than thou believest, the tombs are freighted : like  
With like is buried ; and the monuments  
Are different in degrees of heat."—*Hell*, ix. 125.

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* xiii. 122.

<sup>2</sup> "Like herds with like, in like torment, . . . so that proud with proud, infidel with infidel burn."—*Greg. M. Dial.* iv. 35.

Heresy, in the guise of a fox, endeavours to slink into the Church, but is detected and expelled by Beatrice,<sup>1</sup> the type of dogmatic truth.

From faith springs hope, the sure expectation of future glory, which is to be won by merit, aided by divine grace :<sup>2</sup>

“ ‘ Hope,’ said I,  
 ‘ Is of the joy to come a sure expectance,  
 The effect of grace divine and merit preceding.’ ”  
 —*Par.* xxv. 67.

God is the Supreme Object of the love of the Blessed. Both reason and revelation teach, that our love of God is enkindled and deepened in proportion to our apprehension of His goodness. “ He has created me,” cries Dante, “ and the world around me. He has died for me, that I might love Him in return, and so gain Heaven. This thought has purged my self-love and fixed my heart on Him : ”

“ Good, inasmuch as we perceive the good,  
 Kindles our love ; and in degree the more,  
 As it comprises more of goodness in it.”<sup>3</sup>  
 —*Par.* xxvi. 28.

. . . . .  
 ‘ All grappling bonds, that knit the heart to God,  
 Confederate to make fast our charity.  
 The being of the world ; and mine own being ;

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* xxxii. 118.

<sup>2</sup> “ Hope is the certain expectation of future blessedness, proceeding from divine grace and antecedent merits.”—*Peter Lombard*, iii. 26. “ Hope is said to proceed from merit as regards the things hoped for, in the sense that we hope to obtain beatitude from faith and merits, or as regards an act of perfect hope. But the *habit* of hope, by which we expect beatitude, is not caused by merits, but purely by grace.”—*S. ii. 2. q. 17, a. 1.*

<sup>3</sup> “ That which is properly the cause of love must be also its object. But the proper object of love is good, for love implies a certain connaturalness to, and complacency in, the object loved, and as the good of each being is that which is connatural and proportionate to that being, good must be the cause of love.”—*S. i. 2. q. 27, a. 1*



The death which He endured, that I should live;  
 And that which all the faithful hope, as I do,  
 To the fore-mention'd lively knowledge join'd;  
 Have from the sea of ill-love saved my bark,  
 And on the coast secured it of the right.<sup>1</sup>  
 As for the leaves, that in the garden bloom,  
 My love for them is great, as is the good  
 Dealt by the Eternal Hand, that tends them all."

—*Par.* xvi. 54.

Without faith, hope, and charity no man can enter Heaven, even though he be sinless and practised in other virtues :

"There is a place  
 There underneath, not made by torments sad,  
 But by dun shades alone; where mourning's voice  
 Sounds not of anguish sharp, but breathes in sighs.

There I with these abide,  
 Who the three holy virtues put not on,  
 But understood the rest, and without blame  
 Follow'd them all."—*Purg.* vii. 27.

Shining as a brilliant southern constellation of stars,<sup>2</sup> the poet sees the four cardinal virtues, prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude. This constellation was visible to none save our first parents, since they alone, whilst in

<sup>1</sup> Dante here points out, that in perfect love, God is loved because He is the highest good in Himself (*amor benevolentiae*); but we also love Him because He is our own highest good (*amor concupiscentiae*). "With respect to dispositions, which may be regarded as the material cause, we are said to love anything because it disposes us to love it, say, on account of benefits received; although, having thus begun to love a friend, we continue to do so, not for these benefits, but for his own goodness. . . . Thus God can be loved, not for His own sake, in as far as we are disposed to love Him by benefits received, rewards hoped for, and even by those punishments which we hope through Him to escape."—*S.* ii. 2. q. 27, a. 3.

<sup>2</sup> It is possible, though hardly probable, that Dante through Marco Polo, or in some other way, had heard of the Southern Cross. See Humboldt, *Cosmos*, ii. 331, 486, iii. 329, 361.

Paradise, practised them in perfection.<sup>1</sup> These four are the foundation of all moral virtues.

The life of Christian virtue is twofold—contemplative and active. The former, typified by Rachel, is engaged in the contemplation of Divine truth, the latter, by Lia, in external action.

These two appear to the poet in the night, as representing the comparatively defective virtue of the Old Covenant. Matilda and Beatrice, on the other hand, come to him by day, for they express the perfection of the active and contemplative life in the New Covenant. Dante preferred these characters to Martha and Mary, the patristic types of the two lives.<sup>2</sup> As usual, he loves to represent his ideals in the concrete personages of his poem :

“ A lady young and beautiful, I dream’d,  
Was passing o’er a lea ; and as she came,  
Methought I saw her ever and anon  
Bending to cull the flowers ; and thus she sang :  
‘ Know ye, whoever of my name would ask,  
That I am Leah ; for my brow to weave  
A garland, these fair hands unwearied ply.  
To please me at the crystal mirror, here  
I deck me. But my sister Rachel, she  
Before her glass abides the livelong day,  
Her radiant eyes beholding, charm’d no less  
Than I with this delightful task ; her joy  
In contemplation, as in labour mine.’ ”<sup>3</sup>

—*Purg.* xxvii. 97.

<sup>1</sup> Thom. ii. 2, Prolog.

<sup>2</sup> Luke x. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Lia looks at herself in the mirror, that is, in God, and sees herself crowned with the garland of her good works. Rachel, on the other hand, looks only at God. For an exhaustive account of the nature and difference between the active and contemplative life, drawn from St. Augustine, St. Gregory the Great, Richard of St. Victor, and St. Bernard, see St. Thomas, ii. 2. q. 179-182. “Lia, bleary-eyed but fruitful, signifies the active life, which while engaged in work sees less, . . . and brings forth many children in its good works.”—*Gregor. M. (In Ezech. Hom. 14)*. Lia precedes Rachel, for the active life is

On the doctrine of vows Dante teaches, that by a vow the Christian offers to God the sacrifice of his free-will, his highest natural gift, and binds himself to the practice of good works, not in themselves requisite for salvation.<sup>1</sup> The Church alone, by the power of the keys, can dispense a vow, and then does so, according to Dante, by commuting, not annulling it; for a vow is a contract between God and the soul, and must be in substance fulfilled :

“ This would'st thou know: if failure of the vow  
By other service may be so supplied,  
As from self-question to assure the soul.  
. . . . . Hence now thou may'st infer  
Of what high worth the vow, which so is framed,  
That when man offers, God well-pleased accepts :  
For in the compact between God and him,  
This treasure, such as I describe it to thee,

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negatively and positively the preparation for the contemplative.—S. ii. 2. q. 181, a. 1. “ Nevertheless the contemplative is the highest, because the knowledge and love of God is its immediate object.”—S. ii. 2. q. 182, a. 2.

<sup>1</sup> Dante follows on this subject the teaching of St. Thomas. By a vow a man obliges himself to that which is not obligatory, either by the natural or divine law. It must be *de majori bono*, the greater good being considered in comparison to good simply, viz., what is of common obligation for salvation. The Church can commute the matter of a vow. She can likewise dispense a vow if in any case it become evil, or useless, or a hindrance to a greater good (S. ii. 2. q. 88, a. 2). “ The act of the dispensing authority effects that that which was contained under the vow is so no longer, since it is determined in this case not to be fitting matter for a vow. The ecclesiastical superior, therefore, does not dispense with a natural or divine precept, but only pronounces as to what does or does not fall under the self-imposed obligation of the vower, who was unable to see the act in all its bearings.”—*Ibid.* a. 10. The vower can only change the matter of his vow to some greater offering to God's honour (C. 3. x. *De Jurejur.*) For such a change does not infringe on the original purpose or promise. It belongs, on the other hand, to the Church to change it for something of equal value (St. Alphons. Lig. *Theology. Moral.* 244). [Weighty theologians, however, hold that the vower can change the matter to other of equal value, because he would perform the matter substituted more willingly, and therefore in a manner more agreeable to God.] (St. Lig. *ibid.*)

He makes the victim; and of his own act,  
 What compensation therefore may he find?  
 If that, whereof thou hast oblation made,  
 By using well thou think'st to consecrate,  
 Thou would'st of theft do charitable deed.

.....  
 This sacrifice, in essence, of two things  
 Consisteth; one is that, whereof 'tis made;  
 The covenant, the other. For the last,  
 It ne'er is cancell'd, if not kept: and hence  
 I spake, erewhile, so strictly of its force.  
 For this it was enjoin'd the Israelites,  
 Though leave were given them, as thou know'st, to  
 change

The offering, still to offer. The other part,  
 The matter and the substance of the vow,  
 May well be such, as that, without offence,  
 It may for other substance be exchanged.  
 But at his own discretion, none may shift  
 The burden on his shoulders; unreleased  
 By either key, the yellow and the white.  
 Nor deem of any change, as less than vain,  
 If the last bond be not within the new  
 Included, as the quatre in the six."—*Par. v. 12.*

Hence the warning of Beatrice:

"Be ye more staid,  
 O Christians! not like feather, by each wind  
 Removable; nor think to cleanse yourselves  
 In every water."—*Par. v. 73.*

The vow of perpetual chastity is specially pleasing to  
 God, and it

"So precious in the balance weighs,  
 That all in counterpoise must kick the beam."  
 —*Par. v. 61.*

By it souls betroth themselves to the Heavenly Bride-  
 groom, that with Him, "e'en till death they may keep

watch, or sleep." Most precious also is the vow of poverty, that Bride of Christ, so beloved by Him.

The religious orders, by the triple vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience, are specially consecrated to God's service; hence called *religiosi*, and are ordained by Divine Providence to preserve and edify the Church. Thus in Paradise St. Bonaventure, the Franciscan, praises St. Dominic and the Dominicans; St. Thomas, the Dominican, extols St. Francis and his sons:<sup>1</sup>

"The Providence that governeth the world,  
In depth of counsel by created ken  
Unfathomable, to the end that she,  
Who with loud cries was 'spoused in precious blood,  
Might keep her footing towards her well-beloved,  
Safe in herself and constant unto Him,  
Hath two ordain'd, who should on either hand  
In chief escort her: one, seraphic all  
In fervency; for wisdom upon earth  
The other, splendour of cherubic light."—*Par. xi. 27.*

St. Francis wooed poverty, of late so much neglected, as his bride; and the twain went forth together through the land:

"Their concord and glad looks, wonder and love,  
And sweet regard gave birth to holy thoughts,  
So much, that venerable Bernard first  
Did bare his feet, and in pursuit of peace  
So heavenly, ran, yet deem'd his footing slow.

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<sup>1</sup> [These Religious Orders still maintain this reciprocal courtesy. The Franciscans officiate in the Dominican Church on St. Dominic's Feast, while the grace sung in the Refectory is as follows: "*Ant. Seraphicus Pater Franciscus et Evangelicus Pater Dominicus ipsi nos docuerunt legem tuam, Domine. Ps. cxvii. Laudate Dominum, &c. Ant. Evangelicus Pater Dominicus et Seraphicus Pater Franciscus ipsi, &c. Quoniam confirmatur est, &c. Ant. Seraphicus, &c. Gloria Patri, &c. Sicut erat, &c. Ant. Seraphicus, &c.*" On St. Francis' Day the Dominicans officiate for the Franciscans, and at grace the order of the Saints is reversed, St. Dominic being named first.]

O hidden riches ! O prolific good !  
 Egidius bares him next, and next Sylvester,  
 And follow, both, the Bridegroom, so the bride  
 Can please them. Thenceforth goes he on his way,  
 The father and the master, with his spouse,  
 And with that family, whom now the cord  
 Girt humbly."—*Par. xi. 70.*

While St. Francis by his loving charity and the charm  
 of holy poverty drew men to God, St. Dominic by his  
 powerful intellect destroyed heresy :

" And I speak of him, as the labourer  
 Whom Christ in His own garden chose to be  
 His helpmate. Messenger he seem'd, and friend,  
 Fast knit to Christ ; and the first love he show'd,  
 Was after the first counsel that Christ gave.

Then with sage doctrine and good-will to help,  
 Forth on his great apostleship he fared,  
 Like torrent bursting from a lofty vein ;  
 And dashing 'gainst the stocks of heresy,  
 Smote fiercest, where resistance was most stout."

—*Par. xii. 65.*

In the seventh sphere the poet sees St. Benedict, and  
 with him the heroes of the solitary and contemplative life :

" These other flames,  
 The spirits of men contemplative, were all  
 Enliven'd by that warmth, whose kindly force  
 Gives birth to flowers and fruits of holiness.

And here my brethren, who their steps refrain'd  
 Within the cloisters, and held firm their heart."

—*Par. xxii. 44.*

St. Peter Damian describes with enthusiasm that sternly  
 penitential life of the cloister, which bears rich fruit in  
 heaven :

"There  
 So firmly to God's service I adhered,  
 That with no costlier viands than the juice  
 Of olives, easily I pass'd the heats  
 Of summer and the winter frosts; content  
 In heavenward musings. Rich were the returns  
 And fertile, which that cloister once<sup>1</sup> was used  
 To render to those heavens."—*Par.* xxi. 102.

Guido of Montefeltro laments, as a Religious, the sins of his turbulent life in the world:<sup>2</sup>

"A man of arms at first, I clothed me then  
 In good St. Francis' girdle, hoping so  
 To have made amends. And certainly my hope  
 Had fail'd not."—*Hell*, xxvii. 64.

The religious life is a life of prayer, and so Dante extols the sweet sound of the bell, which calls the Bride of Christ to matins:<sup>3</sup>

"Forthwith,  
 As clock, that calleth up the Spouse of God  
 To win her Bridegroom's love at matin's hour,  
 Each part of other fitly drawn and urged,  
 Sends out a tinkling sound, of note so sweet,  
 Affection springs in well-disposed breast."

—*Par.* x. 134.

And the vesper-bell calls to prayer, not only the Religious, but all Christian souls:

"Now was the hour that wakens fond desire  
 In men at sea, and melts their thoughtful heart  
 Who in the morn have bid sweet friends farewell;

<sup>1</sup> His convent was that of Fonte Avellana, not far from Gubbio.

<sup>2</sup> "Nobly did these famous gentlemen (Lancelotto and Guido di Montefeltro) furl the sails of their worldly adventures, and, giving themselves up to religion in their mature years, laid aside all earthly joys and labours."—*Conv.* iv. 28.

<sup>3</sup> In *Conv.* iv. 23, Dante describes in detail the prayers of the canonical hours.

And pilgrim newly on his road with love  
Thrills, if he hear the vesper bell from far,  
That seems to mourn for the expiring day."

—*Purg.* viii. 1.

From Dante's frequent and urgent exhortations to prayer, we should expect him to dilate on that prayer<sup>1</sup> which is the source and type of all others. Thus we hear it from the lips of the souls in Purgatory, who are doing penance for the sin of pride:

"O Thou Almighty Father! Who dost make  
The heavens Thy dwelling, not in bounds confined,  
But that, with love intenser, there Thou view'st  
Thy primal effluence;<sup>2</sup> hallow'd be Thy Name:  
Join, each created being, to extol  
Thy might; for worthy humblest thanks and praise  
Is Thy blest Spirit.<sup>3</sup> May Thy kingdom's peace  
Come unto us; for we, unless it come,  
With all our striving, thither tend in vain.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "In the brief summary of a few words, how many sayings of the Prophets, Gospels, Apostles, discourses of the Lord, parables, examples, precepts, are touched upon! How many duties are at once discharged! The honouring of God in the FATHER, the testimony of faith in the NAME, the offering of obedience in the WILL, the remembrance of hope in the KINGDOM, the petition for life in the BREAD, the confession of DEBTS in the prayer to FORGIVE, the anxious care about TEMPTATIONS in the call for defence. What wonder God alone could teach, how He would have Himself prayed to."—*Tertullian de Orat.* i. 9, Oxf. trans.

<sup>2</sup> The angels in Heaven have ever felt a special joy in the love of God, which springs from the contemplation of the Divine Essence. Cf. *Conv.* ii. 6, iii. 7. God is in things, not as containing them by contact of quantity, but of power (S. i. q. 8, a. 1). God dwells commonly in all things by presence, power, substance (*ibid.*, a. 3, essence, presence, power), but is said to be familiarly in some by grace and by glory. *Gregor. M. Hom.* 8 in *Ezech.* Cf. *Conv.* iv. 9.

<sup>3</sup> "Al tuo alto vapore." The Name is attributed to the Father (Gesenius s. v. Schem), Power to the Son (1 Cor. i. 24), Vapour or Breath to the Holy Spirit (Wisd. vii. 25), because breathed from the Father and the Son.

<sup>4</sup> "Well does the prayer say *Adveniat*, 'May Thy kingdom come,' for we cannot come to that blessed vision by grace and glory, unless He come to us."—*Nicol. Lyran*, i. h. l. So "No man cometh to Me, unless



As, of their will, the angels unto Thee  
 Tender meet sacrifice, circling Thy throne  
 With loud Hosannas; so of theirs be done  
 By saintly men on earth. Grant us this day  
 Our daily manna, without which he roams  
 Through this rough desert retrograde,<sup>1</sup> who most  
 Toils to advance his steps. As we to each  
 Pardon the evil done us, pardon Thou,  
 Benign, and of our merit take no count.  
 'Gainst the old adversary,<sup>2</sup> prove Thou not  
 Our virtue, easily subdued;<sup>3</sup> but free<sup>4</sup>  
 From his incitements, and defeat his wiles.  
 This last petition, dearest Lord! is made  
 Not for ourselves; since that were needless now;  
 But for their sakes who after us remain."<sup>5</sup>—*Purg.* xi. 1.

A pilgrimage can be the subject of a vow, and the poet describes the joy of the pilgrim, who

"When he rests  
 Within the temple of his vow, looks round  
 In breathless awe."—*Par.* xxxi. 39.

the Father draw him."—*John* vi. 44. "The Empyrean corresponds to the Divine Wisdom, which is full of peace, . . . and this peace descends from above on men of good-will, as announced by the angels at the birth of the Lord."—*Conv.* ii. 5.

<sup>1</sup> The manna is divine grace (*John* vi. 59), and more especially the Blessed Sacrament, for those who are still upon earth. The wilderness (*Exod.* xvi. 4) signifies both the earthly life, and the penitential life in Purgatory.

<sup>2</sup> 1 *Peter* v. 8; *Apoc.* xii. 9; 2 *Cor.* xii. 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Matt.* xxvi. 41.

<sup>4</sup> Dante translates: "Deliver us from the Evil One."

<sup>5</sup> As the souls in Purgatory have departed from the world in sanctifying grace, they have a certain hope of beholding God, and are free from temptation. In teaching that the souls in Purgatory pray for us, Dante follows Gregory the Great (*Dial.* iv. 40) and Peter Damian (*Ep. de Mirac.*), in opposition to St. Thomas (ii. 2. q. 83, a. iv. ad 3). On this point Bellarmine says: "It is not improbable that the souls in Purgatory also pray and impetrate for us; and although St. Thomas teaches the contrary, his reasoning is not convincing. . . . If the souls in Purgatory pray for themselves or for us, I say not that they merit, but that they impetrate from their preceding merits, as the Saints now impetrate for us, although they do not merit."—*De Purgat.* ii. 15.

And he compares his own joy at the sight of the tender St. Bernard to that of

"A wight  
Who haply from Croatia wends to see  
Our Veronica; and the while 'tis shown,  
Hangs over it with never-sated gaze,  
And, all that he hath heard revolving, saith  
Unto himself in thought, 'And didst Thou look  
E'en thus, O Jesus, my true Lord and God?  
And was this semblance Thine?'"—*Par.* xxxi. 93.

In the growing neglect of the ecclesiastical fasts and the decay of filial gratitude, Dante sees fatal signs of degeneracy:

"He that fasts  
While yet a stammerer, with his tongue let loose  
Gluts every food alike in every moon:  
One, yet a babbler, loves and listens to  
His mother; but no sooner hath free use  
Of speech, than he doth wish her in the grave."  
—*Par.* xxvii. 120.

The practice of the theological and moral virtues gains merit,<sup>1</sup> and even the merely natural virtues of the heathen are not left unrewarded.<sup>2</sup> Contrition and works of mercy avail, even at the last moment, to reconcile the soul to God:

"So that, repenting and forgiving, we  
Did issue out of life at peace with God."  
—*Purg.* v. 54.  
"Hearty zeal  
To serve reanimates celestial grace."  
—*Purg.* xviii. 103.

As the soul advances in good works, it becomes confirmed in virtue and approaches the state of future glory,<sup>3</sup> which is

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* xxiv. 40.

<sup>2</sup> *Hell*, iv. 69.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* xviii. 58.

"The effect of grace divine and merit preceding."

—*Par.* xxv. 69.

"The meed, as unto each, in due degree,  
Grace and good-will their measure have assign'd."

—*Par.* xxviii. 105.

And this leads us to the consideration of grace. Grace is the principle of the soul's supernatural life and the source of charity. Without grace, man cannot take one step towards amendment :

"Only this line

Thou shalt not overpass, soon as the sun<sup>1</sup>

Hath disappear'd."—*Purg.* viii. 53.

Even the Gospel, which Christ brought into the world, preached without grace finds no entrance to the heart :

"The sheep, meanwhile, poor witless ones, return

From pasture, fed with wind."—*Par.* xxix. 112.

Without grace no one can lead a virtuous life, still less can perfection be attained :

"But through benign

Largess of heavenly graces, which rain down

From such a height as mocks our vision, this man

Was, in the freshness of his being,<sup>2</sup> such,

So gifted virtually, that in him

All better habits wondrously had thrived."

—*Purg.* xxx. 114.

On grace depends our daily progress.<sup>3</sup> Hence the prayer :

<sup>1</sup> The light of grace. "Walk whilst you have the light, that darkness overtake you not ; and he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whether he goeth."—*John* xii. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Dante here alludes to that period of his early youth in which, under Beatrice's influence, began the higher life described in the *Vita Nuova*.

<sup>3</sup> "(Without grace) man cannot long remain free from mortal sin ; . . . he may avoid particular acts of sin, but never all."—S. i. 2. q. 109, a. 8. *Conc. Trid.* Sess. vi. can. 1, *absque gratia*. Cf. *Thom. Cont. Gent.* iii. 147.

"Grant us this day  
Our daily manna, without which he roams  
Through this rough desert retrograde, who most  
Toils to advance his steps."—*Purg.* xi. 13.

But grace does not compel the will. Those very gifts, natural or supernatural, which render man capable of higher virtue, if abused and rejected, increase his condemnation :

"The more of kindly strength is in the soil,  
So much doth evil seed and lack of culture  
Mar it the more, and make it run to wildness."  
—*Purg.* xxx. 120.

As there is no merit without grace, so, on the other hand :

"To receive the grace which Heaven vouchsafes,  
Is meritorious."—*Par.* xxix. 64.

Prompt correspondence to a first grace ensures a second, and so on from grace to grace.<sup>1</sup> Thus the faithful angels, by enlightening grace and their own merit, were exalted :

"So that, in their will confirm'd,  
They stand, nor fear to fall."—*Par.* xxix. 62.

Faithfully corresponded with, grace renders the practice of supernatural virtue so easy, that those habits at last seem natural and necessary :

"Since with its beam  
The grace, whence true love lighteth first his flame,  
That after doth increase by loving, shines  
So multiplied in thee, it leads thee up  
Along this ladder,<sup>2</sup> down whose hallow'd steps

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* x. 79.

<sup>2</sup> "By every meritorious act man merits an increase of grace, even to the consummation of grace, which is life eternal."—*S.* i. 2. q. 114. a. 8.

None e'er descend, and mount them not again;  
 Who from his phial should refuse thee wine  
 To slake thy thirst, no less constrained were,  
 Than water flowing not unto the sea."—*Par. x.* 79.

Grace<sup>1</sup> unites itself with the soul,<sup>2</sup> and purifies it from the foam of sin, so that the limpid stream of the Spirit flows into it unsoiled.<sup>3</sup> Grace is proffered to the soul up to the last hour of life:

"The effect of grace divine and merit preceding."  
 —*Par. xxv.* 69.

"The meed, as unto each, in due degree,  
 Grace and good-will their measure have assign'd."  
 —*Par. xxviii.* 105.

"We all  
 By violence died, and to our latest hour  
 Were sinners, but then warn'd by light from Heaven."  
 —*Purg. v.* 51.

God pours down His grace on all human beings. When, therefore, a heathen by the aid of grace fulfils the moral law as far as he can, God gives him more grace, and inspires him with the desire for baptism, and thus finally brings him to eternal bliss:<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Grace is the accidental form of the soul itself."—*S. i.* 2. q. 110, a. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Par. xxiv.* 117.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg. xiii.* 80.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 1. Dante supposes Rhipheus to have been saved by implicit faith, of which St. Thomas says, "If any have been saved without a revelation, they must nevertheless have had faith in a Mediator. For although their faith in Him was not explicit, they believed implicitly in Divine Providence, and that God would redeem men by the means He thought best, and as the Spirit should reveal to those who knew the truth, according to the words of Job: 'Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and instructeth us more than the fowls of the air' (Job xxxv. 11)."—*S. ii.* 2. q. 2, a. 7 ad 3. St. Augustine calls implicit faith certain beginnings, or, as it were, conceptions of faith (*Ad. Simplic. i.* 2). St. Thomas says that "remission of sin is obtained by baptism of desire, explicitly or implicitly conceived."—*S. iii.* q. 69, a. 4.

"The other, through the riches of that grace,  
Which from so deep a fountain doth distil  
As never eye created saw its rising,  
Placed all his love below on just and right:  
Wherefore, of grace, God oped in him the eye  
To the redemption of mankind to come;  
Wherein believing, he endured no more  
The filth of Paganism."—*Par. xx. 111.*

The fervent prayers of the saints may also obtain for a soul the grace of conversion. Thus the Emperor Trajan, in answer to the prayers of St. Gregory,<sup>1</sup> was allowed to return to life again from Hell, and to win the salvation of his soul by faith and charity:<sup>2</sup>

"One from the barrier of the dark abyss,  
Where never any with good-will returns,  
Came back unto his bones. Of lively hope  
Such was the meed; of lively hope, that wing'd  
The prayers sent up to God for his release,  
And put power into them to bend His will.  
The glorious Spirit of whom I speak to thee,  
A little while returning to the flesh,  
Believed in Him, Who had the means to help;  
And, in believing, nourish'd such a flame  
Of holy love, that at the second death  
He was made sharer in our gamesome mirth."

—*Par. xx. 99.*

Such examples of God's uncovenanted mercy should check all rash attempts to penetrate the mysteries of divine predestination, which are hidden even from the blessed. Men must be content to know, that all His decrees are ordained in justice and in love:

<sup>1</sup> See footnote p. 212.

<sup>2</sup> "A man may congruously merit for another a first grace; for if he be in a state of grace and does God's will, it is congruous and in keeping with the nature of friendship, that God should satisfy his will with regard to another's salvation."—*S. i. 2. q. 114, a. 6.*

"O how far removed,  
 Predestination! is thy root from such  
 As see not the First Cause entire; and ye,  
 O mortal men! be wary how ye judge:  
 For we, who see our Maker, know not yet  
 The number of the chosen."—*Par. xx. 122.*

"Our Sovran Lord, that settleth this estate  
 In love and in delight so absolute,  
 That wish can dare no further, every soul  
 Created in His joyous sight to dwell,  
 With grace, at pleasure, variously endows."<sup>1</sup>

—*Par. xxxii. 53.*

The seven gifts of the Holy Ghost are represented in the *Commedia* under the figure of seven lamps, from which issue seven pencils of rainbow-tinted flame.<sup>2</sup>

The Church, with her head, the Roman Pontiff, is man's guide to salvation. To her keeping Christ has intrusted the Holy Scriptures, both of the Old and New Covenant:

"Either Testament,  
 The Old and New, is yours: and for your guide,  
 The Shepherd of the Church. Let this suffice  
 To save you. When by evil lust enticed,  
 Remember ye be men, not senseless beasts;  
 Nor let the Jew, who dwelleth in your streets,  
 Hold you in mockery. Be not as the lamb,  
 That, fickle wanton, leaves its mother's milk  
 To dally with itself in idle play."—*Par. v. 76.*

By the side of Holy Scripture, Dante acknowledges tradition as a second independent rule of faith.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The Divine Goodness, being in itself one and simple, can only under many forms be represented in creatures, . . . and therefore, to complete the universe (as an image of God), diverse grades of being are required."—*S. i. q. 23, a. 5.*

<sup>2</sup> The seven gifts of the Holy Ghost enumerated by Isaias are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and the fear of the Lord. *Apoc. i. 4, 5; Isai. xi. 2, 3; Conv. iv. 21.*

<sup>3</sup> "It must be noted that part of the Scripture was before the Church, that part of it came with the Church, and part after the Church. Before the Church were the Old and New Testament, the

The Church is the Bride of Christ, whom He espoused with that loud cry from the Cross, in His Blood. Peter, chosen by Christ to be her Head, has received from Him the keys of the kingdom of Heaven :

Covenant which the Psalmist says was 'commanded for ever,' of which the Church speaks to her Bridegroom saying : 'Draw me, we will run after Thee.' With the Church came those venerable chief Councils, with which no faithful Christian doubts but that Christ was present. For we have His own words to His disciples, when He was about to ascend into Heaven : 'Lo, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.' To which Matthew testifies. There are also the writings of the Doctors, Augustine and others, of whom, if any doubt that they were aided by the Holy Spirit, either he has never beheld their fruit, or, if he has beheld, he has never tasted thereof. After the Church are the traditions, which they call Decretals, which, although they are to be venerated for their apostolical authority, yet we must not doubt are to be held inferior to fundamental Scripture, seeing that Christ rebuked the Pharisees for this very thing ; for when asked : 'Why do Thy disciples transgress the traditions of the ancients ?' (for they neglected the washing of hands), He answered them, as Matthew testifies : 'Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition ?' Thus He intimates plainly that tradition was to have a lower place. But if the traditions of the Church are after the Church, it follows that the Church had not its authority from traditions, but rather traditions from the Church."—*De Monarchia*, iii. 3. Thus, far from denying the existence of tradition, Dante accurately distinguishes between divine and human tradition. The former is deposited in the [*ex cathedra* decisions of the Popes] and the decrees of General Councils, and being given with the assistance of the Holy Ghost, is an infallible rule of faith. The latter (the Papal Decretals) [*not ex cathedra*] are to be received with the respect due to the Holy See, but lay no claim to infallibility. Even to the teachings of the great Doctors of the Church the poet ascribes a quasi-supernatural authority (*a Spiritu Sancto adjuti*) ; but they have no infallibility, except in as far as they express the universal teaching of the Church, although a special providential guidance cannot be denied to such teachers as St. Augustine, and the like. In this he follows St. Thomas, who says : "Theology in its arguments uses the Canonical Scriptures as its proper and necessary authority, and employs the writings of Doctors as authorities which are indeed her own, but only of probable authority. For our faith rests on the revelation made to the Apostles and Prophets, who wrote the canonical books, and not on any private revelation which Doctors may have received."—I. q. 1, a. 8. Whence Augustine in Ep. 19 ad Hieronym. says, 'I attach weight to these writers in proportion to their holiness and learning, but I do not believe an opinion true, merely because they held it.' " Dante, however, is not so accurate, when he places the existence of the New Testament before that of the Church.



"To whom she thus: 'O everlasting light  
Of him, within whose mighty grasp our Lord  
Did leave the keys, which of this wondrous bliss  
He bare below!'"—*Par.* xxiv. 34.

"Tell me now  
What treasures from Saint Peter at the first  
Our Lord demanded, when He put the keys  
Into his charge?"—*Hell*, xix. 93.

The Roman Pontiff is the successor of St. Peter. *Æneas* is the founder of that Rome with its Empire, which was

"'Stablish'd for the holy place, where sits  
Who to great Peter's sacred chair succeeds."

—*Hell*, ii. 25.

The Pope of the day indeed is a man, and can therefore err, but notwithstanding his frailties the Papacy is of divine institution. Hence the *Commedia* distinguishes between the Holy See and its occupant: <sup>1</sup>

"Not through its fault,  
But his who fills it basely."—*Par.* xii. 83.

Thus God has enriched Rome with two suns, the Pope and the Emperor, to enlighten us in the paths of temporal and eternal peace: <sup>2</sup>

"Rome, that turn'd it unto good,  
Was wont to boast two suns, whose several beams  
Cast light on either way, the world's and God's."

—*Purg.* xvi. 109.

<sup>1</sup> Thus St. Leo distinguishes between the chair and its occupant: "Other are the sees, other those that fill them" (Ep. 101). "The rights of the sees remain, though diverse at times are the merits of their occupants" (Ep. 109).

<sup>2</sup> In his letter to the princes and lords of Italy, Dante says: "When the incarnate Son of God announced His Gospel on earth, He divided the kingdom between Himself and the Emperor, and enjoined that to each should be given that which is his."—*De Monarchia*, pass.

The victorious progress of the Church through the ages is represented, as we have seen,<sup>1</sup> by a triumphal chariot drawn by Christ in the form of a Gryphon, and accompanied by the Cherubim, the writers of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, and the Theological and Moral Virtues :<sup>2</sup>

"Beneath a sky

So beautiful came four-and-twenty elders<sup>3</sup>  
By two and two, with flower-de-luces crown'd.  
All sang one song: 'Blessed be thou among  
The daughters of Adam! and thy loveliness  
Blessed for ever!' . . . . .

As light

In Heaven doth second light, came after them  
Four animals, each crown'd with verdurous leaf.  
With six wings each was plumed; the plumage full  
Of eyes; and the eyes of Argus would be such,  
Were they endued with life.<sup>4</sup> . . . . .  
The space, surrounded by the four, enclosed  
A car triumphal: on two wheels<sup>5</sup> it came,  
Drawn at a Gryphon's neck.<sup>6</sup> . . . . .

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* p. 227.

<sup>2</sup> *Apoc.* xii. In his letter to the Cardinals, Dante also speaks of the "chariot of the Bride, on which they have turned their backs, and have not cared to make it follow the track of the Crucified One." The image of the chariot is taken from *Ezech.* i. 15. Cf. *Isai.* lxi. 15; *Ps.* lxvii. 18.

<sup>3</sup> The four-and-twenty elders (*Apoc.* iv. 10) signify the twenty-four books of the Old Testament. They are crowned with white lilies, symbolising pure faith; their hymns of praise merely repeat the words of the Angel, and of St. Elizabeth (*Luke* i. 28, 42). From the earliest times, Mary has been the type of the Church. *Augustin.* (*Casar. Arelat.*) *Supplem. Serm.* cxxi. 5. Cf. *Apoc.* xii. 1; *De Symb. ad Catech.* ii. 1.

<sup>4</sup> These four animals are the symbols of the four Evangelists. Compare *Ezech.* i. 4; *Apoc.* iv. 8.

<sup>5</sup> The two wheels represent the Old and New Covenant (see *Eph.* ii. 20), or, according to others (Philaethes), Scripture and tradition.

<sup>6</sup> The Gryphon is half-eagle, half-lion. The former symbolises the divine, the latter the human nature in Christ. Hence the first is golden, and the second red and white, the colours of love and innocence. See *Cant.* v. 10-11; also, for the lion, *Gen.* xlix. 9; *Apoc.* v. 5; *Didron, Hist. d. D.* p. 324; *Augustin, Enarr. in Ps.* xc. *Serm.* i.

The members, far  
As he was bird, were golden; white the rest,  
With vermiel intervein'd. . . . .

Three Nymphs,<sup>1</sup>  
At the right wheel, came circling in smooth dance:  
The one so ruddy, that her form had scarce  
Been known within a furnace of clear flame;  
The next did look, as if the flesh and bones  
Were emeralds; snow new-fallen seem'd the third.  
Now seem'd the white to lead, the ruddy now;  
And from her song who led, the others took  
Their measure, swift or slow. At the other wheel,  
A band quaternion,<sup>2</sup> each in purple clad,  
Advanced with festal step, as, of them, one  
The rest conducted; one, upon whose front  
Three eyes were seen. In rear of all this group,  
Two old men I beheld, dissimilar

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<sup>1</sup> The three Nymphs on the right are the three Theological Virtues, Faith, white; Hope, green; Charity, red. The white and the red alternately take the lead, because in the work of regeneration faith comes first, and the other virtues follow (Conc. Trid. Sess. vi. cap. 6. 8). And on the other hand, it is charity which animates and perfects faith and hope. "There is a twofold order, viz., of generation and perfection. . . . In the order of generation, in which matter precedes form and is less perfect, faith precedes hope, and hope, charity, as regards acts. For the appetite is only moved to believe in, or hope for, that which the intellect has apprehended. Therefore, in the order of generation, faith precedes hope and charity. . . . But in the order of perfection charity precedes faith and hope, since charity informs both faith and hope, and perfects both in virtue. And thus charity, being the form of all virtues, is the parent and root of all."—S. i. 2. q. 62, a. 4. Cf. ii. 2. q. 23, a. 7, 8.

<sup>2</sup> The four Nymphs on the left, clad in the colour of Love, are the four Cardinal Virtues. They are led by Prudence, which dominates the three other virtues of Eubulia (counsel), Synesis (judgment), Gnome (command.) "Subordinate to the virtue of Prudence, whose province it is to command well, are Eulalia, good counsel, Synesis and Gnome, whose action is judicial." For prudence guided by counsel directs, judges, and commands all the moral virtues. "As to choose rightly is the special function of a moral virtue, it cannot be preserved without prudence. For to choose aright, there must not only be an inclination to the right end, but a formal selection of the necessary means; and this belongs to prudence, whose office it is to counsel, judge, and command the means to the end."—S. i. 2. q. 65, a. 1.

In raiment, but in port and gesture like,  
 Solid and mainly grave; of whom, the one  
 Did show himself some favour'd counsellor  
 Of the great Coan,<sup>1</sup> him, whom Nature made  
 To serve the costliest creature of her tribe.  
 His fellow mark'd an opposite intent;<sup>2</sup>  
 Bearing a sword,<sup>3</sup> whose glitterance and keen edge,  
 E'en as I viewed it with the flood between,  
 Appall'd me. Next, four others I beheld  
 Of humble seeming:<sup>4</sup> and, behind them all,  
 One single old man,<sup>5</sup> sleeping as he came,  
 With a shrewd visage. And these seven, each  
 Like the first troop were habited; but wore  
 No braid of lilies on their temples wreathed,  
 Rather, with roses and each vermeil flower."

—*Purg.* xxix. 80.

The Church, founded by God, is under His special providence and guidance; this

"Imperial Head,  
 Who reigneth ever."—*Par.* xii. 36.

As the Church is the Bride of Christ, she cannot lie,<sup>6</sup> but is infallible; especially so in the decisions of General Councils, wherein no believer doubts that Christ is present.<sup>7</sup> The whole economy of satisfaction for sin is committed to the Church, and, as a rule, no one finds grace without

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke, the writer of the Acts of the Apostles, who was a physician (Col. iv. 14).

<sup>2</sup> St. Paul.

<sup>3</sup> The sword is the symbol of the two-edged Word of God (Heb. iv. 12).

<sup>4</sup> The writers of the Epistles, SS. Peter, John, James, and Jude.

<sup>5</sup> The author of the Apocalypse, who "sees in a trance." Others see in the four of "humble seeming" the four great Doctors of the Church, SS. Gregory, Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome; and following them St. Bernard, the type of contemplation. See *Par.* xxxi. 55. This latter interpretation seems to accord best with the fundamental idea of the poet (*Par.* x.-xii.) Their heads are crowned with roses, the flower of sacred love.

<sup>6</sup> *Conv.* ii. 4, 6.

<sup>7</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 3.

her intervention and that of her Head, who reigns where "Tiber's wave grows salt."<sup>1</sup> Whoever, therefore, is not loosed by the Church from censure on earth, even though repentant, is bound in Purgatory :

"True it is,  
That such one as in contumacy dies  
Against the Holy Church, though he repent,  
Must wander thirty-fold for all the time  
In his presumption past : if such decree  
Be not by prayers of good men shorter made."

—*Purg.* iii. 131.

The intercession of the Church aids the souls in the other world ;<sup>2</sup> by means of indulgences granted to those who fulfil the required conditions, and effectual also for the souls of the departed, she remits temporal punishments :

"These three months past indeed,<sup>3</sup>  
He, whoso chose to enter, with free leave  
Hath taken."—*Purg.* ii. 94.

Of the Sacraments, Holy Baptism is the first, for by it we enter the kingdom of Christ, and our souls are espoused to the faith :

"Ere thou pass  
Farther, I would thou know, that these of sin  
Were blameless ; and if aught they merited,  
It profits not, since baptism was not theirs,  
The portal to thy faith."—*Hell*, iv. 30.

"When, at the sacred font,  
The spousals were complete 'twixt faith and him,  
Where pledge of mutual safety was exchanged."

—*Par.* xii. 56.

Since the coming of Christ, infants are only admitted to

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* ii. 97.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* iii. 141, iv. 129, v. 70, viii. 71, xiii. 117.

<sup>3</sup> Three months had just elapsed since the proclamation of the Jubilee of the year 1300.

Heaven through baptism. Under the Old Covenant, circumcision, and before Abraham, the faith of the parents, remitted original sin.<sup>1</sup> Although they have entered into bliss without merit, God, for inscrutable reasons, has ordained that they should enjoy different degrees of glory:

“Therefore, as grace  
Inweaves the coronet, so every brow  
Weareth its proper hue of orient light,  
And merely in respect to his prime gift,  
Not in reward of meritorious deed,  
Hath each his several degree assign’d.  
In early times with their own innocence  
More was not wanting, than the parent’s faith,  
To save them: those first ages past, behoved  
That circumcision in the males should imp  
The flight of innocent wings: but since the day  
Of grace hath come, without baptismal rites  
In Christ accomplish’d, innocence herself  
Must linger here below.”—*Par.* xxxii. 61.

When man, forgetful of God, turns to earthly things and sins, it is grace which awakes him and urges him to repent. Thus we have seen Lucia, as “prevenient grace,” carry Dante in his sleep, and, without his co-operation (*gratia operans*),<sup>2</sup> to the gate of Purgatory—symbol of the sacrament of penance. The angel who guards the gate and bears a flaming sword, the type of the judicial Word of God, warns him not to enter without preparation and

<sup>1</sup> “It is held commonly by all, that circumcision remitted original sin” (a. 1). “It was the preparation for baptism and its figure” (a. 4). “Both before and after the institution of circumcision, faith in Christ to come was the sole means of justification. But before the institution no pledge and sign of the faith was required, for then the faithful were not separated from the infidel, to form one society in the worship of the one God. Nevertheless faithful parents probably offered prayers to God for their new-born infants, or gave them some kind of blessing, especially if they were in danger.”—S. iii. q. 68, a. 2; q. 70, a. 4.

<sup>2</sup> “In us, without us.”—*Augustin, De Corrupt. et Grat.* c. 6. “The first movements are produced in man, but not by man.”—*Conc. Arausic.* ii. can. 20.

true contrition ; otherwise the sacrament would turn to his condemnation :

"Take heed your coming upward harm ye not."

—*Purg.* ix. 79.

Virgil explains how they came there :

"A heavenly dame, not skilless of these things,  
(Replied the instructor) told us, even now,  
'Pass that way: here the gate is.'"—*Purg.* ix. 80.

One of the most characteristic effects of awakening grace is, to open the eyes of the penitent to the transitoriness and vanity of all that the world can give :

"Late, alas !

Was my conversion: but, when I became  
Rome's pastor, I discerned at once the dream  
And cozenage of life; saw that the heart  
Rested not there, and yet no prouder height  
Lured on the climber: wherefore, of that life  
No more enamour'd, in my bosom love  
Of purer being kindled."—*Purg.* xix. 105.

The three steps which lead up to the gate of Purgatory symbolise the conversion of the sinner and his repentance. The first, of white marble, so brightly polished that he sees in it his own reflection, signifies the examination of conscience; the second, of rugged stone, "fire-scarred both

<sup>1</sup> "How sweet I suddenly found it to await the sweetness of those joys, and what I feared to lose, I now with joy put away. For Thou didst cast them out from me, Thou true and sovereign Sweetness. Thou castest them forth and for them enterest in Thyself; sweeter than all pleasure, though not to flesh and blood; brighter than all light, but more hidden than all depths; higher than all heights, yet not to those high in their own conceits. Now was my soul free from the biting cares of canvassing and getting, of wallowing in the mire of sense, and scratching off the itch of lust! and my infant tongue spake freely to Thee, my Lord and my God."—*S. August. Conf.* Bk ix. 1.

lengthwise and across," signifies contrition;<sup>1</sup> the third, blood-red, denotes the purpose of amendment, which cannot be accomplished without suffering and mortification :

"The lowest stair was marble white, so smooth  
And polish'd, that therein my mirror'd form  
Distinct I saw. The next, of hue more dark  
Than sablest grain, a rough and singed block,  
Crack'd lengthwise and across.<sup>2</sup> The third, that lay  
Massy above, seem'd porphyry, that flamed  
Red as the life-blood spouting from a vein."

—*Purg.* ix. 86.

The angel (the Confessor) sits at the threshold of the gate, his feet resting on the third step, because it is his office to guide the penitent in his contrition and satisfaction. Full of remorse, the sinner throws himself on his knees before him, and thrice strikes his breast, indicating the act of confession. The angel, in ash-coloured vesture, writes seven P's on his brow, inquires into his worthiness, and gives him absolution by the application of the silver and golden keys. Then the door opens for him, and he enters Purgatory, there to fulfil his penance and expiation :

<sup>1</sup> "To be made little or crushed, means that something solid has been reduced to the smallest particle. And since sin cannot be remitted unless man wholly discard that affection to it, which by its continued presence and strength had grown within him, therefore the act by which sin is to be remitted is said, by a simile, to be a crushing (*contritio*)."—S. Supp. q. 1, a. 1.

"From that same source of sin  
Will tears constant flow,  
If the hard heart be crushed  
By penitential blow."—*Lenten Hymn, Sunday Lauds.*

<sup>2</sup> *Crepata*, cracked, from *crepacuore*, a pang that breaks the heart. This stone is split crosswise, both in length and breadth, to show that the whole inward man must be broken up and all sin repented of. It is scarred by fire, for repentance should be a consuming fire, to destroy all sin.

<sup>3</sup> Referring to the bloody scourgings of great penitents.



"On this God's angel either foot sustain'd,  
 Upon the threshold seated, which appear'd  
 A rock of diamond.<sup>1</sup> Up the trinal steps  
 My leader cheerly drew me. 'Ask,' said he,  
 'With humble heart, that he unbar the bolt.'  
 Piously at his holy feet devolved  
 I cast me, praying him for pity's sake  
 That he would open to me; but first fell  
 Thrice on my bosom prostrate.<sup>2</sup> Seven times  
 The letter, that denotes the inward stain,  
 He on my forehead, with the blunted point  
 Of his drawn sword, inscribed. And 'Look,' he cried,  
 'When enter'd, that thou wash these scars away.'  
 Ashes, or earth ta'en dry out of the ground,  
 Were of one colour with the robe he wore."

—*Purg.* ix. 93.

Dante repeatedly insists on contrition, as the indispensable condition of absolution :

"I cleanse away with these the evil life,  
 Soliciting with tears that He, Who is,  
 Vouchsafe Him to us."—*Purg.* xiii. 98.

True contrition "espouses us to God;"<sup>3</sup> but, as is evident, purpose of amendment must accompany it :

"No power can the impenitent absolve;  
 Nor to repent, and will, at once consist,  
 By contradiction absolute forbid."—*Hell*, xxvii. 113.

Although the sinner may endeavour to conceal his sin, yet it is fully known to the Eternal Judge. A frank confession only can rob sin of its sting, and cleanse the soul of its stain :

"Hadst thou  
 Been silent, or denied what thou avow'st,

The diamond figures the rock on which the Church and her power rests. *Matt.* xvi. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Signifying sins of thought, word, and deed.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* xxiii. 74.

Thou hadst not hid thy sin the more ; such eye  
 Observes it. But whene'er the sinner's cheek  
 Breaks forth into the precious-streaming tears  
 Of self-accusing, in our court the wheel  
 Of justice doth run counter to the edge."

—*Purg.* xxxi. 33.

To the Church belongs the plenary power of remitting to the penitent, who is duly contrite and has fulfilled the penance prescribed, the remainder of his temporal punishment. Nevertheless, Dante warns us against a too easy credulity in the "unstamped metal" <sup>1</sup> of "lying privileges."<sup>2</sup>

Its justification complete, all memory of its evil deeds is blotted out, and the purified soul remembers only its good works. The streams of Lethe and Eunoe, of which it drinks, effect, as we have seen, this wondrous change :

"The water, thou behold'st, springs not from vein,  
 Restored by vapour, that the cold converts ;  
 As stream that intermittently repairs  
 And spends his pulse of life ; but issues forth  
 From fountain, solid, undecaying, sure :  
 And by the will omnific, full supply  
 Feeds whatsoe'er on either side it pours ;  
 On this, devolved with power to take away  
 Remembrance of offence ; on that, to bring  
 Remembrance back of every good deed done.  
 From whence its name of Lethe on this part ;  
 On the other, Eunoe : both of which <sup>3</sup> must first  
 Be tasted, ere it work."—*Purg.* xxviii. 127.

Our review of Dante's theology finds a fitting conclusion in "the last things," which we will now consider.

All that is born must die, and life itself is brief : <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* xxix. 134.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.* xxvii. 49.

<sup>3</sup> "So overflowing is the joy of the saints in *patria* that they cannot mourn. They feel no grief for their past sins, but happiness in the divine mercy, the cause of their forgiveness. Even their demerits, which penance destroyed, are remembered only in that same penance, and rank with it among other meritorious works."—*S. Supp.* q. 89, a. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Par.* xvi. 77.



"Nor were I even here, if, able still  
To sin, I had not turn'd me unto God."—*Purg.* xi. 89.

But the purifying process of Purgatory, allegorically considered, signifies also the penance done by converted sinners in this world.<sup>1</sup> This penance, if neglected here, must be done there :<sup>2</sup>

"Here my lot ordains  
Under this weight to groan, till I appease  
God's angry justice; since I did it not  
Amongst the living, here amongst the dead."  
—*Purg.* xi. 69.

Whatever may be the duration of their sufferings,<sup>3</sup> at the last day all will enjoy the vision of God :

"Ponder not  
The form of suffering. Think on what succeeds :  
Think that, at worst, beyond the mighty doom  
It cannot pass."—*Purg.* x. 97.

The prayers and good works of their brethren on earth avail to shorten the pains of the holy souls :

"Well befits, his long  
Endurance should be shorten'd by thy deeds."  
—*Par.* xv. 90.

<sup>1</sup> It is so explained by Benvenuto d'Imola : "The soul, which turns from sin while it is in the body, is in a moral Purgatory, doing that penance by which its sins are purged ; but the separated soul is in the real Purgatory." The oldest commentators, Giacompo di Dante, Giacompo della Lana, and others, give the same interpretation.

<sup>2</sup> "If justice requires that sin, even when its guilt is destroyed, should suffer the penalty due, he who dies contrite and absolved before he has made satisfaction must suffer after this life ; and therefore to deny Purgatory is to gainsay the justice of God."—*S. Supp.* App. a. 1 ; *Bonav. Breviloq.* vii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> "The souls in Purgatory are punished less severely than in Hell, and more so than in the world ; but however grievous be their pains, they can trust and know that they are not in Hell."—*Bonav. Breviloq.* vii. 2. "Those pains are said to be conditionally willed, which must be endured to obtain a good. The will then tolerates the pain, which is therefore called voluntary ; and thus the pains of Purgatory are so called."—*S. Supp.* App. q. 2, a. 2.

"Upon my verge of life I wish'd for peace  
 With God; nor yet repentance had supplied  
 What I did lack of duty, were it not  
 The hermit Piero, touch'd with charity,  
 In his devout oraisons thought on me."

—*Purg.* xiii. 116.

"To drink up the sweet wormwood of affliction  
 I have been brought thus early, by the tears  
 Stream'd down my Nella's cheeks, her prayers devout,<sup>1</sup>  
 Her sighs have drawn me from the coast, where oft  
 Expectance lingers."—*Purg.* xxiii. 78.

But prayers and good works avail nothing for their relief,  
 unless they proceed from a soul which is itself in a state of  
 grace :<sup>2</sup>

"If prayer do not aid me first,  
 That riseth up from heart which lives in grace,  
 What other kind avails, not heard in Heaven?"

—*Purg.* iv. 129.

The holy souls earnestly desire the suffrages of their  
 brethren in the Church Militant on earth :

"I . . . . entreat thee  
 . . . . That of thy courtesy thou pray

<sup>1</sup> The prayers of Forese's widow enabled him to pass rapidly from outer Purgatory to Purgatory proper.

<sup>2</sup> "All the faithful, united by charity, are members of the one body of the Church, but one member is helped by another, and can be assisted by another's merit [and this in two ways]. 1. As a consequence of the state of grace, the work of one man can profit another, not only by way of prayer, but also of merit, since all who are bound together in charity profit in some way reciprocally from their mutual works. . . . 2. By the intention of the doer, by which his works become in a manner the property of those for whom they are done, as if bestowed on them by the doer. As to suffrages offered by the wicked, we may consider the work done, or the doer. The prayers of a sinner, considered as his act, can in no way merit for himself or others; but considered as the act of another, for example, the prayers of a priest in the solemn Office for the Dead; the prayers of the priest, though he be a sinner, can avail for the dead, because the act is understood as the act of another (the Church) in whose name it is done."—S. Supp. q. 71, a. 1, a. 3.

Those who inhabit Fano, that for me  
 Their adorations duly be put up,  
 By which I may purge off my grievous sins."

—*Purg.* v. 66.

"Ah! so may the wish,  
 That takes thee o'er the mountain, be fulfill'd,  
 As thou shalt graciously give aid to mine."

—*Purg.* v. 84.

"When I was freed  
 From all those spirits, who pray'd for other's prayers  
 To hasten on their state of blessedness."—*Purg.* vi. 26.

"When thou shalt be beyond the vast of waves,  
 Tell my Giovanna, that for me she call  
 There, where reply to innocence is made."

—*Purg.* viii. 70.

We are bound to pray for the souls in Purgatory, for they are always praying for us :

"In our behoof  
 If their vows still be offer'd, what can here  
 For them be vow'd and done by such, whose wills  
 Have root of goodness<sup>1</sup> in them?"—*Purg.* xi. 30.

What are the effects of divine glory on the souls and bodies of the blessed? Glaucus changed into a sea-god by eating the mystic herb, and his ninefold lustrations in the hundred streams, is an image of the sudden and complete transformation which Dante underwent at the sight of Beatrice in Heaven. In vain does he attempt to express these emotions; only those who have seen that vision know what it means :

"And I with ken  
 Fix'd upon her, from upward gaze remov'd,  
 At her aspect, such inwardly became  
 As Glaucus,<sup>2</sup> when he tasted of the herb

<sup>1</sup> The root of goodness in the will is grace. S. i. 2. q. 109, a. 2.

<sup>2</sup> See Ovid's *Metamorph.* xiii. fab. 9.

That made him peer among the ocean gods :  
 Words may not tell of that transhuman change ;  
 And therefore let the example serve, though weak,  
 For those whom grace hath better proof in store."

—*Par. i. 63.*

So overwhelming is this joy, that man's unaided powers would fail beneath it.<sup>1</sup>

Heaven is represented by the poet under various figures—as a tree which is always bowed with fruit and never loses its leaves;<sup>2</sup> the banquet of the Lamb, wherein He perennially feasts His own;<sup>3</sup> a religious house, of which Christ Himself is the Superior; a celestial Rome, "wherein Christ dwells a Roman;"<sup>4</sup> and as a white, luminous rose,<sup>5</sup> whose petals are the Saints of the Old and New Covenants.

Since the souls of the blessed see all things in God, and even those in Purgatory receive their ideas immediately from Him, all relations of space cease necessarily to exist:<sup>6</sup>

"Near or remote, what there avails, where God  
 Immediate rules, and Nature, awed, suspends  
 Her sway!"—*Par. xxx. 120.*

The laws which govern our bodies also here no longer prevail, for the gift of subtlety, bestowed by God on glorified bodies, enables them to pass through each other, and to exist simultaneously in the same place:<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Par. xxi. 9.*

<sup>2</sup> *Par. xviii. 25.*

<sup>3</sup> *Par. xxiv. 2.*

<sup>4</sup> "Di quella Roma onde Cristo è Romano."—*Purg. xxxii. 102.*

<sup>5</sup> *Par. xxx. 115.*

<sup>6</sup> "The separated soul understands individual objects by species, infused by the divine light, in which things near and distant are seen with equal clearness. Distance of place, therefore, can in no way impede the knowledge of the separated soul."—*S. i. q. 89, a. 7.*  
 "Things seen in the Word are beheld, not successively, but together, . . . since individual objects are not seen through likenesses of them, but all are beheld in the Divine Essence."—*S. i. q. 12, a. 10.*

<sup>7</sup> "'Subtlety' is so called from power of penetrating. . . . This condition of body arises from the dominion which the glorified soul, as its form, acquires over it; and by reason of its almost complete subjection

"If I then  
Was of corporeal frame, and it transcend  
Our weaker thought, how one dimension thus  
Another could endure, which needs must be  
If body enter body."—*Par. ii. 36.*

As earthly things, by manifesting the divine power and wisdom, raise our thoughts to God, so the contemplation of the blessed in Heaven is a preparation for the sight of Him in His Essence :

"Let thy up-soaring vision range at large,  
This garden through; for so, by ray divine  
Kindled, thy ken a higher flight shall mount."  
—*Par. xxxi. 88.*

In contemplating God the blessed read in that "sacred book, whose leaves, or white or dusky, never change;"<sup>1</sup> and behold as in a mirror the thoughts reflected, before the mind has framed them :

"For in this life  
Both less and greater in that mirror look,  
In which thy thoughts, or e'er thou think'st, are shown."  
—*Par. xv. 59.*

As in God the when and where are present,<sup>2</sup> and time and place vanish; the blessed see with absolute certainty things that have not yet external existence :<sup>3</sup>

"O plant, from whence I spring! revered and loved!  
Who soar'st so high a pitch, that thou as clear

to the spirit, the glorified body is called spiritual. The first effect of this subjection is that the body shares the specific nature of the soul, as matter does that of form; and therefore is subjected to the other actions of the soul, as far as the soul is its mover."—*S. Supp. q. 83, a. 1.*

<sup>1</sup> *Par. xv. 48.*

<sup>2</sup> *Par. xxix. 12.*

<sup>3</sup> "According to the opinion of Gregory, it seems that the souls of the saints, in seeing God, know all things which are done on earth; for they are equal to the angels."—*S. i. q. 89, a. 8.*



As earthly thought determines two obtuse  
 In one triangle not contain'd, so clear  
 Dost see contingencies, ere in themselves  
 Existent, looking at the point whereto  
 All times are present."—*Par.* xvii. 14.

And since God knows man's thoughts before they arise  
 in the mind, so in Him the blessed perceive our thoughts  
 and motives :<sup>1</sup>

"E'en as His beam illumines me, so I look  
 Into the eternal Light, and clearly mark  
 Thy thoughts, from whence they rise."—*Par.* xi. 19.

From this vision of God, the Highest Good, unveiling  
 Himself to His creature as He is, intense love neces-  
 sarily results, and the desires of the soul are eternally  
 satisfied :

"There is in Heaven a Light, whose goodly shine  
 Makes the Creator visible to all  
 Created, that in seeing Him alone  
 Have peace."—*Par.* xxx. 100.

The vision is indefectible. None who have seen God can  
 turn from Him again :<sup>2</sup>

"It may not be  
 That one, who looks upon that Light, can turn  
 To other object, willingly, his view.

<sup>1</sup> "When the Lord shall come and enlighten the things of darkness, and shall manifest the thoughts of the hearts, then the closest secrets will be revealed : no man will conceal aught from his neighbour, for stranger will no longer be."—*Aug. Ep.* xiii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> "Whoever sees the Divine Essence cannot possibly wish not to see it. For dissatisfaction with a good possessed comes either from its insufficiency, and a more adequate substitute is sought, or from some inconvenience attached to it, which makes us turn against it. But the vision of the Divine Essence fills the soul with every good, for it unites it to the source of all goodness. . . . And therefore the blessed cannot possibly of their own will abandon their beatitude."—*S. l.* 2. q. 5, a. 4.

For all the good, that will may covet, there  
Is summ'd ;<sup>1</sup> and all, elsewhere defective found,  
Complete."—*Par.* xxxiii. 95.

As the earth and planets are illumined by the sun, so is the abode of the blessed by the light of the Godhead. The Sacred Humanity Itself derives Its splendour from the same Eternal Source :

"As in the calm full moon, when Trivia smiles  
In peerless beauty, 'mid the eternal nymphs,  
That paint through all its gulfs the blue profound ;  
In bright pre-eminence so saw I there  
O'er million lamps a Sun, from whom all drew  
Their radiance, as from ours the starry train :  
And through the living light, so lustrous glow'd  
The substance,<sup>2</sup> that my ken endured it not."

—*Par.* xxiii. 25.

Their joy finds utterance in the song of praise, which unceasingly ascends to the ever-blessed Trinity and the Incarnate Son :

"There was sung  
No Bacchus, and no Io Pæan, but  
Three Persons in the Godhead, and in One  
Person that Nature and the human join'd."

—*Par.* xiii. 21.

This hymn of the blessed is a

"Song, that as much our muses doth excel,  
Our syrens with their tuneful pipes, as ray  
Of primal splendour doth its faint reflex."

—*Par.* xii. 6.

There is but one Heaven wherein all enjoy the Beatific Vision, though in various modes and degrees.<sup>3</sup> But the

<sup>1</sup> "Nor do the blessed lose their free-will because their sins have no more power to please them. . . . Are we to say that God is deprived of His freedom because He cannot sin ?"—*Civ. Dei*, xxii. 30.

<sup>2</sup> The Sacred Humanity.

<sup>3</sup> "The distinction of the mansions or degrees of beatitude is derived from a twofold principle, the one proximate, the other remote. The

blessed do not repine at the lower measure of joy allotted to them, nor do they envy those whose bliss is greater; for their will is absolutely one with the will of God:

"Rather it is inherent<sup>1</sup> in this state  
Of blessedness, to keep ourselves within  
The Divine Will, by Which our wills with His  
Are one. So that as we, from step to step,  
Are placed throughout this kingdom, pleases all,  
Even as our King, Who in us plants His will;  
And in His will is our tranquillity."<sup>2</sup>—*Par.* iii. 79.

Indeed their appreciation of the perfect correspondence between merit and glory enhances their felicity; the joys of Heaven, notwithstanding their variety, perfectly accord, like an exquisite harmony in music:

proximate principle is the inequality of disposition in the Blessed, from which follows an inequality of perfection in their beatific operation. The remote principle is the inequality of the merit, by which they attained to their beatitude. In the former way, the mansions are distinguished according to the *charitas patriæ*; the more perfect this is, the greater the soul's capacity of the Divine Charity, and the greater the consequent perfection of the Divine Vision. In the second way, the mansions are distinguished according to the *charitas viæ*. For our acts are meritorious by reason, not of the substance of the acts themselves, but of the habit of virtue by which they are informed; and the power of meriting in all virtues is from charity, which has the end for its object. So that all inequality of merit is due to inequality of charity, and thus the *charitas viæ* distinguishes the mansions by the principle of merit.—S. i. q. 12, a. 6. "Through diversity of merit one man is more perfect than another."—*Conc. Florent. in Decr. Union.*

<sup>1</sup> "The substantial quickening (*informans*) form is that which gives substance its being."—*Axiom of the Schools.*

<sup>2</sup> "Who can conceive, far less describe, what degrees of honour and glory will be awarded to the various degrees of merit? Yet doubtless, degrees there will be; and further, this great good that blessed city shall witness, that as now the angels do not envy the archangels, so the lower spirits will not envy those higher. For no one will wish to be what he has not received, though bound in fetters of union with him who has received; just as in the body the finger does not seek to be the eye, though both members take their place harmoniously in the complete body. And thus along with his gift, greater or less, each shall receive the further gift to desire no more than he has."—*Civ. Dei*, xii. 30, 2.

"But it is part of our delight, to measure  
 Our wages with the merit; and admire  
 The close proportion. . . .  
 Of diverse voices is sweet music made:  
 So in our life the different degrees  
 Render sweet harmony among these wheels."

—*Par. vi. 122.*

While the essential joy which the blessed derive from the Beatific Vision is unchangeable, their accidental<sup>1</sup> joy is increased in three ways. First, being all united in the charity of God, they mutually rejoice in each other's joy, and their happiness increases with every soul that enters Heaven:<sup>2</sup>

"As in a quiet and clear lake the fish,  
 If aught approach them from without, do draw  
 Towards it, deeming it their food; so drew  
 Full more than thousand splendours towards us;  
 And in each one was heard: 'Lo! one arrived  
 To multiply our loves!'"—*Par. v. 97.*

Secondly, the poet represents the souls of the blessed as the leaves of the Heavenly Rose, above which the angels hover like a swarm of bees, alighting now on one petal, now on another, and again soaring up to God, from Whom streams of light are ever descending.

Thus the Blessed constantly receive fresh accessions of love and joy from the truths imparted to them by the angels, who have a deeper knowledge of the Divine Essence:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Beatitudo accidentalis*. The *beatitudo essentialis* consists in the Beatific Vision, which all possess.

<sup>2</sup> "If thou truly lovest another as thyself, then is thy joy doubled when the same is granted to thy brother; for thou rejoicest at his happiness, as much as at thine own. And the greater the number of those whom thou so lovest, the greater is thy bliss. Thus it will be in the state of perfect charity with that innumerable multitude of angels and men, who love all others as themselves, and rejoice in the joy of others, as though it were their own."—*Anselm, Prolog. c. 25.*

<sup>3</sup> "Two things concur in an intellectual operation—the intellectua faculty, and the likeness of the object understood; and in both ways an angel can manifest to another a truth he has apprehended. For first,

"In fashion as a snow-white rose, lay then  
 Before my view the saintly multitude,  
 Which in His own blood Christ espoused. Meanwhile,  
 That other host, that soar aloft to gaze  
 And celebrate His glory, Whom they love,  
 Hover'd around, and, like a troop of bees,  
 Amid the vernal sweets alighting now,  
 Now clustering, where their frequent labour glows,  
 Flew downward to the mighty flower, or rose  
 From the redundant petals, streaming back  
 Unto the steadfast dwelling of their joy.  
 Faces had they of flame, and wings of gold:  
 And as they flitted down into the flower,  
 From range to range, fanning their plummy loins,  
 Whisper'd the peace and ardour, which they won  
 From that soft winnowing."—*Par.* xxxi. 1.

Thirdly, the bliss of the blessed is accidentally augmented through the love which they bear to their brethren still militant on earth, and the efficacious intercession they can offer for them :<sup>1</sup>

a superior angel may strengthen the intellectual power of an inferior angel, by turning towards him (*ordo conversionis*), which has the same effect in spiritual beings as local propinquity (*ordo propinquitatis*) has with corporeal natures. [The angels reflect like mirrors the intellectual, invisible light they receive.] Secondly, as regards the likeness of the thing understood, a superior angel receives a truth as a kind of universal idea, which is beyond the capacity of the intellect of an inferior angel ; though it could, agreeably to its nature, apprehend that same truth under its particular aspect. The truth, therefore, which the superior angel apprehends as an universal, it particularises (*distinguit*), and presents to the inferior angel in a manner suited to its understanding. All the angels, superior and inferior alike, see the Divine Essence immediately ; and as to this, one angel does not impart knowledge to another ; but the exemplars of the divine works, which are seen in God as in their cause, are beheld in greater number by those who see God more perfectly. And thus a superior angel knows more in God of the exemplars of the divine works than an inferior, and illuminates him concerning them."—*S.* i. q. 106, a. 1.

[According to some Thomists, the two above-named operations are but effects of the same act, viz., that by which the object is rendered intelligible, in which case illumination only signifies the manifestation of a truth.]

<sup>1</sup> "Universal created causes are as instruments, with respect to the First Uncreated Cause."—*Thom. cont. Gent.* ii. 21.

"'Tell who ye are,' I cried. Forthwith it grew  
In size and splendour, through augmented joy."

—*Par.* viii. 50.

Before their brethren on earth can express their desires, they are already known to the blessed in Heaven.<sup>1</sup> They accede to every fitting request offered with confidence.<sup>2</sup>

"Our charity,  
To any wish by justice introduced,  
Bars not the door; no more than she above,<sup>3</sup>  
Who would have all her court be like herself."

—*Par.* iii. 42.

They rejoice in kind offices,<sup>4</sup> and are always striving to increase the happiness of others.<sup>5</sup>

What will the number of the elect be in Paradise? Dante gives a relative answer to this question. He divides the Heavenly Rose into two sections; the saints of the Old Testament are seated on the left side, and are separated above from the thrones of the New Testament saints on the right by a receding line, formed by the holy women of Israel. These are reckoned as the ancestresses of Christ, Who, according to the flesh, sprang from a daughter of Israel, and hence, through David and Abraham, from Adam. Below, the Old and New Testament saints are divided left and right by the descending tiers of the Fathers of the Church and founders of religious Orders, through whom Christ is continually born anew in the hearts of men. The left side of the rose is full; on the right there are seats still vacant. Dante, therefore, implies that the

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* xxxiii. 17, ix. 19.

<sup>2</sup> "God operates through the agency of second causes, not because of any defect of His power, but to complete the order of the universe, and thus diffuses His goodness in a manifold manner; not only in giving to things their own proper goodness, but also to become themselves causes of goodness to others. And thus it is through no defect of His mercy, that He wills His clemency to be won by the intercession of the Saints."—*S. Supp.* q. 72, a. 2.

<sup>3</sup> The uncreated love of God.

<sup>4</sup> *Par.* ix. 25.

<sup>5</sup> *Par.* viii. 35.

numbers of the Saints of the Old and New Testament are equal :<sup>1</sup>

"So Heaven's decree  
Forecasts, this garden equally to fill,  
With faith in either view, past or to come."

—*Par.* xxxii. 31.

The souls of the Blessed have a natural desire for reunion with their bodies,<sup>2</sup> because, since man's nature consists of body and soul, this reunion will add, though only extrinsically, to the soul's happiness :<sup>3</sup>

"Our shape, regarmented with glorious weeds  
Of saintly flesh, must, being thus entire,  
Show yet more gracious. Therefore shall increase  
Whate'er, of light, gratuitous imparts  
The Supreme Good ; light, ministering aid,  
The better to disclose His glory : whence,

<sup>1</sup> This view is peculiar to Dante, and is not supported by either the Schoolmen or the Mystics. "Of the number of human creatures predestinated, some say that it will equal those of the fallen angels, and of the whole angelic creation combined. But it is better said that the number of the elect, who are to dwell in bliss in Heaven, is known to God alone, as the Collect for the Living and the Dead has it."—*S. i. q. 23, a. 7.*

<sup>2</sup> *Par.* xiv. 57.

<sup>3</sup> "The resurrection, as regards its end, is natural, for the soul by nature is united to the body ; but it is effected by divine power alone" (*Thom. cont. Gent.* iv. 81). "Although the soul can exist by itself, it is not thus specifically complete" (*De Anim.* a. 1 ad 2). "Nor as part of human nature has it its natural perfection, unless united to the body" (*S. i. q. 90, a. 4*). "One thing is necessary to the perfection of another in two ways : 1. To constitute its essence (being), and thus the soul is necessary to the essence or being of man. 2. To render it perfect as regards its well-being (or integrity), and thus beauty of body and quickness of intellect belong to the perfection of man. Now the body belongs to the integrity of human beatitude, though not to its essence. For as the operation depends upon the nature of that which operates, the more perfect the soul is in its nature, the more perfect will be its operation ; and in this its happiness consists. . . . The desire of the separated soul is wholly satisfied as regards the object desired (*pars appetibilis*), because it has what contents its desire, but as regards the soul itself (*pars appetens*), there is not the same content, because it does not possess that good in all the ways it would wish, and therefore on reunion with the body, its beatitude increases, not in intensity, but in extent."—*S. i. 2. q. 4, a. 5.*

The vision needs increasing, must increase  
 The fervour, which it kindles; and that too  
 The ray, that comes from it."—*Par.* xiv. 39.

As the body of Adam received the gift of immortality in virtue of its immediate creation by God, so likewise our bodies will participate in the immortality recovered for us by Christ.<sup>1</sup> But as the resurrection was the fruit of His conflict and sufferings, therefore the Church, His mystical body, must complete her warfare on earth before her members rise again:<sup>2</sup>

"And all the rest  
 Took up the song. At the last audit, so  
 The blest shall rise, from forth his cavern each  
 Uplifting lightly his new-vested flesh."—*Purg.* xxx. 12.

The splendour which radiates from their souls will renew and transfigure their bodies:<sup>3</sup>

"But as the gleed  
 Which gives out flame, yet in its whiteness shines  
 More lively than that, and so preserves  
 Its proper semblance; thus this circling sphere

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* vii. 141.

<sup>2</sup> "As Christ first had grace in His Soul in a passible Body, and by His Passion arrived at the glory of immortality, so we His members are freed indeed by His Passion from the debt of every punishment, yet so that, while still in passible and mortal bodies, we first receive the spirit of adoption of sons, by which we are inscribed heirs of immortal glory. But after that we are made like to the Passion and Death of Christ, we are brought into immortal glory, according to Rom. viii. 17. 'Yet so if we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified with Him.'"—*S.* iii. q. 49, a. 3.

<sup>3</sup> The clarity of the bodies of the saints proceeds from the overflowing glory of their souls (*S. Supp.* q. 85, a. 1). The incorruptible form renders the body incorruptible in so far as its matter is wholly subject to the soul; but in virtue of the clarity and power of the soul elevated to the Divine Vision, the body united to it will be totally subject to it, and that (by the divine power) not only as to its being, but even as to its actions, movements, and qualities (*C. Gen.* iv. 86). The four gifts conferred upon the bodies of the saints are impassibility, subtlety, agility, and clarity (*S. Supp.* q. 82–85). Changed into the newness of a spiritual body, clothed with incorruption and immortality, therefore their power of sight will be immeasurably superior to ours (*Civ. Dei*, xxii. 21. 29, 3).



Of splendour shall to view less radiant seem  
 Than shall our fleshly robe, which yonder earth  
 Now covers. Nor will such excess of light  
 O'erpower us, in corporeal organs made  
 Firm, and susceptible of all delight."—*Par.* xiv. 47.

The damned also shall rise again from their graves, when summoned by the trumpets to the Valley of Josaphat :<sup>1</sup>

"When thus my guide: 'No more his bed he leaves  
 Ere the last angel-trumpet blow. The Power  
 Adverse to these shall then in glory come,  
 Each one forthwith to his sad tomb repair,  
 Resume his fleshly vesture and his form,  
 And hear the eternal doom re-echoing rend  
 The vault.'"—*Hell*, vi. 96.

And as with the Blessed the glorified body shines with the glory of the soul, so the damned bear even in their bodies the punishment of their sins; and since the body belongs to the perfection of the human being, and the more a being is perfect, the more susceptible is it of joy or pain, so when body and soul are reunited the torment of the damned will be more intense:

"Thus I questioned: 'Shall these tortures, sir!  
 When the great sentence passes, be increased,  
 Or mitigated, or as now severe?'  
 He then: 'Consult thy knowledge;<sup>2</sup> that decides,  
 That as each thing to more perfection grows,  
 It feels more sensibly the good and pain.  
 Though ne'er to true perfection may arrive,  
 This race accurst, yet nearer then, than now,  
 They shall approach it.'"—*Hell*, vi. 105.

<sup>1</sup> *Hell*, x. 11. *Joel*, iii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> "The bodies of the damned must be duly conformed to their souls, . . . and will remain passible as now, and even more so; yet, while they are thus afflicted by sensible things, they do not corrupt. Their sense of suffering comes from the repulsive objects which act upon their senses."—*Thom. cont. Gent.* iv. 89; *Conv.* iv. 7, 8. Cf. Aristotle, *De Part. Anim.* i. 5; *De Anim.* ii. 2.

## CHAPTER X.

## DANTE AND REFORM.

THE preceding outline of the theology of the *Commedia* is sufficient to prove to every unbiassed mind the soundness of Dante's Catholic faith. His orthodoxy was first questioned in the year 1556 by Matthias Flaccus, who, in his *Catalogus Testium Veritatis Evangelicæ*, hails Dante as a precursor of the Reformation. Thirty years later, in 1586, Perot de Mezières, in his *Avviso Piacevole*, and his contemporary, Du Plessis-Marly, in his *Mysterium Iniquitatis seu Historia Papatus*, followed in the same strain. De Mezières was triumphantly refuted by Bellarmine;<sup>1</sup> Du Plessis-Marly, both by the Dominicans and by Bishop Coëffeteau, who died in 1623. With the revival of the study of the *Commedia* in the beginning of this century, renewed attacks were made on Dante's Catholicism by Ugo Foscoli, 1823-27, who was answered by Gian Antonio Maggi. In reply to Rossetti,<sup>2</sup> 1832, Dante's orthodoxy was ably defended by the following writers:—Delecluze, 1834; A. W. Von Schlegel, 1836; Scolari, 1836; Zinelli, 1839; Pianini, 1840; Giuliani, a distinguished critic of Dante, 1841; Ozanam, 1847; and Mr. Charles Lyell, 1842. Among modern German authors

<sup>1</sup> *De Controversiis Christianæ Fidei. De Rom. Pontif. Append. ed. Venet.*, tom. ii. p. 479 sq.

<sup>2</sup> Author of the *Commento Analitico*, and *Sullo Spirito Antipapale*. F. Chr. Schlosser, *Dantestudien*, 1885, has adopted many of his views. E. Aroux, 1854, was refuted by Minich and Boissard.

who claim Dante as an anti-papal champion, C. Graul stands pre-eminent. He was admirably refuted by Giuliani in 1844. Still more recently, C. F. Göschel, E. Feuerlein, and R. Pfeleiderer have again attempted to protestantise Dante. All these and similar extravagances are founded on a complete misunderstanding both of the poet and of Catholic dogma.

Wegele says with truth, "Dante must undoubtedly be considered a Catholic poet, and the greatest. What else can explain the absolute unity which he claims for the Church, and the way in which he identifies it with Christianity? His poem is steeped in Catholic mysticism, and the whole framework follows the lines of Catholic dogma. To us he is a Catholic and nothing else, in spite of his independent line in politics."<sup>1</sup> His strictures are not aimed at the unity of the Church or the divine character of the Papacy, but at what he deemed abuses. Such utterances have always been allowed by the Church, and have often come from her most devoted servants; as, for instance, SS. Peter Damian, Bernard, Bonaventure, and Catherine of Sienna. Dante has ever been honoured in the Catholic Church by writers of all degrees, from simple monks who read and expounded him, to Popes themselves, and from St. Catherine of Sienna to Boccaccio and Tiraboschi. Visconti, Archbishop of Milan, founded an association for editing his works, and Serravalle, Bishop of Fermo, translated the *Commedia* into Latin. In Florence, Orvieto, Pisa, Bologna, Venice, and Piacenza, public lectures on the poet were given in church. And in 1857 Pius IX. himself placed a wreath on the tomb of Dante at Ravenna.

The aim of Dante in the *Commedia* was to effect a reformation in politics, religion, and morals,<sup>2</sup> as in the *Vita Nuova* he had endeavoured to purify poetry by raising

<sup>1</sup> Vorrede zur Göttlichen Komödie, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> Dante Alighieri's Leben und Werke, 2d edit. p. 565.

it to a truer and more serious tone, and in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* to defend his own language against its latinising depreciators.<sup>1</sup> The standard by which the poet judged all things was, we repeat, the Divine Ideal,<sup>2</sup> and he felt keenly the contrast between the exemplar and the copy,<sup>3</sup> like an artist "whose faltering hand is faithless to his skill,"<sup>4</sup> and how the "brightness of the seal"<sup>5</sup> is tarnished by human frailty. Thus he makes St. Benedict say :

"Mortal flesh  
Is grown so dainty, good beginnings last not  
From the oak's birth unto the acorn's setting.  
His convent Peter founded without gold  
Or silver; I with prayers and fasting, mine;  
And Francis, his in meek humility.  
And if thou note the point, whence each proceeds,  
Then look what it hath err'd to, thou shalt find  
The white grown murky."—*Par.* xxii. 83.

Christ Himself is the Prototype of the Church and of her visible life;<sup>6</sup> therefore the poet thus rebukes the godless world :

"O ye misguided souls!  
Infatuate, who from such a good estrange  
Your hearts, and bend your gaze on vanity,  
Alas for you!"—*Par.* ix. 10.

His reproof is addressed to all ranks, all professions, all classes among his contemporaries. To all alike he cries, "Your steps have wander'd from the path."<sup>7</sup> He upbraids the Florentine matrons for their immodest dress, telling them that neither savage nor Saracen women require the spiritual or temporal scourges, to make them wear decent

<sup>1</sup> "To the perpetual shame and confusion of those evil-minded Italians, who commend the vulgar tongue of others and depreciate their own, I affirm that they are moved to this by five detestable errors."—*Conv.* i. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.* xiii. 48.

<sup>3</sup> *Par.* xxviii. 50.

<sup>4</sup> *Par.* xiii. 73.

<sup>5</sup> *Par.* xiii. 70.

<sup>6</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 10.

<sup>7</sup> *Par.* viii. 154.

clothing.<sup>1</sup> He praises the simplicity of former times, when the Florentine lady took leave of her glass with "unsmirched face," and busied herself with her flax and distaff.<sup>2</sup> In his Hell, unchaste women are perpetually whirled onwards and buffeted by furious winds;<sup>3</sup> whilst in Purgatory those are commended<sup>4</sup> who have lived "in virtue, chastity, and the bands of wedded love." He calls for a reform in the bringing up of children, who love to listen to their mother while yet babblers, but when grown older, "wish her in her grave."<sup>5</sup> He blames those fathers who constrain their children to enter religion :

"But ye perversely to religion strain  
Him, who was born to gird on him the sword."

—*Par.* viii. 151.

He lays his finger on the cancer at the root of Italian burgher life, the envy that sees its own ruin in another's success,<sup>6</sup> and "the confusion of its persons."<sup>7</sup> He recalls the old days when Florence "within her ancient limit-mark "

"Was chaste and sober, and abode in peace."

—*Par.* xv. 93, 94.

He urges princes to observe continency, and denounces the "common vice and pest of courts."<sup>8</sup> He reminds them

"How well is loved in Heaven the righteous king."

—*Par.* xx. 59.

And how, in Hell, many who now hold themselves mighty kings

"Shall wallow in the mire,  
Leaving behind them horrible dispraise."

—*Hell*, viii. 49.

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* xxiii. 93.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* xxv. 128.

<sup>7</sup> *Par.* xvi. 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.* xv. 108.

<sup>5</sup> *Par.* xxvii. 123.

*Hell*, v. 32.

<sup>6</sup> *Par.* vi. 134.

<sup>8</sup> *Hell*, xiii. 68.

He accounts for all Italy's disasters by the fact

"That none  
Bears rule in earth, and its frail family  
Are therefore wanderers."—*Par.* xxvii. 129.

In Canto vii. of *Purgatory* he severely blames Rudolph of Hapsburg, "who might have healed the wounds whereof fair Italy hath died."<sup>1</sup> He stigmatises Wenceslaus, "pampered with rank luxuriousness and ease;"<sup>2</sup> Philip the Fair, "Gallia's bane,"<sup>3</sup> the "new Pilate," with his "adulterate money;"<sup>4</sup> Charles of Anjou; Charles of Valois. He reproves the effeminacy of Alphonsus X. of Spain, and the avarice and cowardice of Frederic of Aragon. The kings of Portugal, Norway, Hungary, Cyprus, Navarre, and others are cited as examples of evil rulers, whose names are written among the reprobate.<sup>5</sup>

Dante certainly did not spare princes, but his reforming zeal is especially directed against ecclesiastics. In the first place, however, he rebukes those patrons who have placed their sons, when, "of body ill-compact and worse in mind,"<sup>6</sup> at the head of a monastery, instead of its "vero pastor," to the great detriment of the clergy. Like a St. Theresa, he describes the damnation of many such offenders, and threatens those who are yet living with the judgment that will in due time overtake them:

"The sword of Heaven is not in haste to smite,  
Nor yet doth linger; save unto his seeming,  
Who, in desire or fear, doth look for it."

—*Par.* xxii. 16.

He rebukes especially the religious Orders, the sons of St. Francis and St. Dominic, of whose important services to the Church he had spoken so highly, but who, to his mind, had become worldly and relaxed:

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* vii. 94.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* vii. 103.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* vii. 111.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* xx. 91.

<sup>5</sup> *Par.* xix. 112.

<sup>6</sup> *Purg.* xviii. 124.

"But the track,  
Which its smooth fellies made, is now deserted:  
That, mouldy mother is, where late were lees.  
His family, that wont to trace his path,  
Turn backward, and invert their steps."—*Par. xii. 104.*

Whilst St. Bonaventure condemns the Franciscans in the following lines:

"But hunger of new viands tempts his flock;  
So that they needs into strange pastures wide  
Must spread them: and the more remote from him  
The stragglers wander, so much more they come  
Home, to the sheepfold, destitute of milk.  
There are of them, in truth, who fear their harm,  
And to the shepherd cleave; but these so few,  
A little stuff may furnish out their cloaks."

—*Par. xi. 116.*

St. Thomas bewails the declension of the Dominicans; but most scathing of all are St. Benedict's reproofs to his own sons:

"The walls, for abbey rear'd, turn'd into dens;<sup>1</sup>  
The cows, to sacks chok'd up with musty meal.  
Foul usury doth not more lift itself  
Against God's pleasure, than that fruit, which makes  
The hearts of monks so wanton: for whate'er  
Is in the Church's keeping, all pertains  
To such, as sue for Heaven's sweet sake;<sup>2</sup> and not  
To those, who in respect of kindred claim,  
Or on more vile allowance."—*Par. xxii. 75.*

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<sup>1</sup> *Matth. xxi. 13; Jerm. vii. 11.*

<sup>2</sup> According to the axiom of the Church, "The revenues of the Church are the patrimony of the poor." Nor are the goods of the Church, which belong to God, to be given to relations, but to be distributed to the poor. Cf. Bernard, *De Morib. Episcop.* cap. 2; *Conc. Trident.* Sess. xxv. cap. i., *de reform.* Dante, we must remember, demands from Religious the primitive observance of their rule in all its strictness, while the Church, on the other hand, had sanctioned mitigations in it. Nor was laxity ever universal at any one period, either in one or all the Orders. The discipline of Clugny, which had

The Bishops are blamed with equal severity, especially those of Feltro<sup>1</sup> and Vicenza;<sup>2</sup> and Ruggieri, the cruel Bishop of Pisa.<sup>3</sup> Dante bitterly accuses those who "wear the hat, that still from bad to worse is shifted."<sup>4</sup> He burns with indignation against the worldly and luxurious lives of the Cardinals, their vanity and ostentation,<sup>5</sup> their indifference to the sacred interests of the Church, whose head had left Rome and fixed himself at Avignon.<sup>6</sup> Yet, in the midst of these passionate and somewhat exaggerated<sup>7</sup> diatribes, he admits that there are exceptions, and that the corruption is by no means universal.

Whilst cardinals, bishops, and clergy had thus become unmindful of their duties, the sacred office of preaching must naturally share the general decay. Christ's commission was to preach the Gospel, not impostures<sup>8</sup> or their own inventions, letting "the Gospel sleep."<sup>9</sup> He denounces

decayed under Abbot Pontus, was restored by Peter the Venerable, who died in 1156 (Wilkins, *Peter der Ehrwürdige*, 1857). St. Bernard and his Order were fruitful labourers in the vineyard, in the thirteenth century; equally so St. Romuald and his new Congregation in the eleventh; St. Norbert and the Premonstratensians in the twelfth. The vigorous Benedictine stock never ceased to put forth new and healthy branches, and John of Salisbury says even of the unreformed Orders: "that great saints were to be found in all" (*Polycrat.* p. 699).

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* ix. 50.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.* ix. 47.

<sup>3</sup> *Hell*, xxxiii. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Par.* xxi. 117.

<sup>5</sup> *Par.* xxi. 124.

<sup>6</sup> Letter to the Italian Cardinals: "Perhaps you will indignantly ask, who is this man who, unawed by the swift punishment of Oza, yet dares to lift his hand to support the tottering altar? Truly I am but one of the least of Christ's sheep, and have no pastoral authority to abuse and no riches. By the grace of God I am what I am, and the zeal of His house devours me. . . . It is not the Ark of the Covenant, but the oxen that are dragging it off the track, with which I concern myself. All have chosen the love of gain for their spouse, she who is the mother of ungodliness and injustice, not of Christian love and holiness." Cf. Bonaventure, *Lib. Apolog.* q. 1.

<sup>7</sup> "Faith and innocence

Are met with but in babes; each taking leave

Ere cheeks with down are sprinkled."—*Par.* xxvii. 118.

<sup>8</sup> *Par.* xxix. 115.

<sup>9</sup> *Par.* xxix. 101.



the unauthorised indulgences often promulgated by the monks,<sup>1</sup> and the perversion of pious gifts to profane, and even sinful uses.<sup>2</sup>

But of course the heaviest responsibility lies with him<sup>3</sup> who is appointed Head of the Universal Church, and terrible are his denunciations of several Popes. He indeed always distinguishes between the Pope and the Papacy, the person and the office; he admits that even in the most corrupt times divine truth (Beatrice), the theological and cardinal virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost still remain with the Church. It is true also that his attacks are directed against Popes who have been deprived by death of their office,<sup>4</sup> or, as in the case of Boniface VIII., against one whom he did not consider a legitimate Pontiff,<sup>5</sup> and that he puts his comminations in the mouths of the blessed in Heaven, and more especially of St. Peter;<sup>6</sup> just as he makes the founders of the religious Orders each rebuke his own for its degeneracy. True, too, that great saints have said very severe things about the worldliness of the Church's pastors, and that before the Reformation, especially in Italy, men thought with great freedom and weighed their words but little.<sup>7</sup> For, as St. Augustine says, "When there were no gainsayers, they spoke truth more securely."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* xxix. 129.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.* xxix. 131.

<sup>3</sup> *Par.* v. 76.

<sup>4</sup> *Hell*, xi. 8; *Hell*, xix. 54, 86, iii. 56; *Purg.* xix. 95.

<sup>5</sup> *Par.* xxvii. 19.

<sup>6</sup> *Par.* xxvii. 17.

<sup>7</sup> "The destruction of religious unity prejudiced religious liberty and the freedom of thought—grand in its way—which spared not even the Papacy itself, provided the Church's unity was unattacked."—*Von Reumont, Briefe heiliger und gottesfürchtiger Italiener*, 1877, p. 26.

<sup>8</sup> *Augustin. c. Julian*, i. 6: "Vobis nondum oblatrantibus, securius loquebantur." C. Cantù says: "In those days the scandals and faults of men in high places were blamed with a freedom of language, which in our obsequious times we have lost the power of understanding" (*Il Secolo di Dante*, 1865, p. 8); whereas hardly ten years after Luther's appearance the chronicler Sebastian Franck (Janssen, *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*, ii. 579) complains: "Formerly under the Papacy we could speak severely of the vices of princes and rulers; now we must all be courtiers, or we are called rebels."

Nevertheless, Dante's reproaches were certainly embittered by personal resentment, both against Boniface VIII,<sup>1</sup> in whom, rightly or wrongly, he saw the destroyer of his life's happiness, and against the Guelphs, his most famous political opponents. Without blaming Dante or defending him, we merely note the fact, and hold, further, that these attacks on the Popes are a defence of the Papacy itself, since it is the very dignity of their office which makes any fault in a Pope so conspicuous. Thus we find his reverence for the keys<sup>2</sup> checks the torrent of his indignant words.<sup>3</sup> He complains that the Church, once a vine, now is grown an "unsightly bramble:"<sup>4</sup>

"Their traffic in that sanctuary, whose walls  
With miracles and martyrdoms were built."

—*Par.* xviii. 118.

He blames the too frequent excommunications:<sup>5</sup>

"Taking the bread away,  
Which the good Father locks from none."

—*Par.* xviii. 124.

<sup>1</sup> Not less than nine times does he vent his wrath against this Pope, the first time in *Hell*, xix. 54, the last in *Par.* xxvii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Hell*, xix. 104.

<sup>3</sup> "What shall we say to shepherds like these? What shall we say when the substance of the Church is wasted, while the private estates of their own kindred are enlarged? But perchance it is better to proceed with what is before us, and in religious silence to wait for our Saviour's help."—*De Monarch.* ii. 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Par.* xxiv. 109.

<sup>5</sup> "Ecclesiastical authority may commit, as regards circumstances (i.e., non-essentials), some human fault, either by multiplying precepts, or by excessive rigour, or by penalties, for such defects are not incompatible with the Church's holiness."—*Suar. de Fide, Disp. v. sect. 8.* "I do not approve all the Church's laws, nor do I commend all her penalties, censures, excommunications, suspensions, irregularities, interdicts. . . . It may be said, in short, that those who rashly and without discretion defend every decision of the Supreme Pontiff, on whatever subject, do not support and strengthen the authority of the Holy See, but weaken and destroy it. Peter needs neither falsehood, nor flattery of ours."—*M. Canus. Loc. Theol.* v. 5.

Covetousness is the great cause of decay;<sup>1</sup> the Decretals, not the Gospel, are now the main study of the clergy. From Heaven a voice exclaims :

“‘O poor bark of mine!’ it cried,  
‘How badly art thou freighted!’”—*Purg.* xxxii. 127.

Avarice has led Popes to oppress good men and favour evil-doers :<sup>2</sup>

“Not to this end was Christ’s Spouse with my blood,  
With that of Linus and of Cletus, fed,  
That she might serve for purchase of base gold :  
But for the purchase of this happy life  
Did Sextus, Pius, and Callixtus bleed,  
And Urban ; they whose doom was not without  
Much weeping seal’d. No purpose was of ours,  
That on the right hand of our successors,  
Part of the Christian people should be set,  
And part upon their left ;<sup>4</sup> nor that the keys,  
Which were vouchsafed me, should for ensign serve  
Unto the banners that do levy war  
On the baptized : nor I, for sigil-mark,  
Set upon sold and lying privileges :<sup>5</sup>  
Which makes me oft to bicker and turn red.”

—*Par.* xxvii. 36.

The primary cause of all these evils which devastated the Church, “turning the shepherd to a wolf,”<sup>6</sup> was, to his mind, the gift of Constantine to Pope Sylvester, whereby the Church acquired riches and political influence, and became entangled in worldly affairs, and was brought into conflict with the Empire.<sup>7</sup> Dante’s aim was to restrict the authority of the Church to purely spiritual matters, and once more to restore the Empire to the position of an universal

<sup>1</sup> The same complaint is made by Innocent IV., who ascribes to it the secular spirit of the clergy. *Bulæus, Hist. Univ.*, Paris, ad. a. 1254.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.* ix. 129.

<sup>3</sup> *Hell*, xix. 106.

<sup>4</sup> Greater partiality to the Guelphs than the Ghibellines.

<sup>5</sup> Abuse of dispensations.

<sup>6</sup> *Par.* ix. 128.

<sup>7</sup> *Hell*, xix. 118.

monarchy, founded by God. His principle was erroneous; his scheme was foredoomed; his cry for reform died in the air and left no trace. He did not, however, maintain that the Empire was absolutely independent of the Church; on the contrary, in the conclusion of his work *De Monarchia* he is careful to explain: "Yet this proposition must not be taken so narrowly as to deny that in certain matters the Roman Prince is subject to the Roman Pontiff. For this temporal happiness is ordered with a view to the happiness which shall not taste of death. Let, therefore, Cæsar be reverent to Peter, as the first-born son is reverent to his father, that he may be illuminated with the light of his father's grace, and so may be stronger to lighten the world over which he has been placed by Him alone Who is the Ruler of all things, spiritual as well as temporal."<sup>1</sup> Upon this K. Hegel remarks: "As the relation between the Emperor and the Pope is thus made one of piety alone, its principle is necessarily undefined. And consequently, what have not Popes claimed in virtue of their paternal authority?"<sup>2</sup> Friedberg also observes: "Dante agrees with Bellarmine, who vindicates this deference for the Pope, but who nevertheless ascribes to him an authority, though indirect, over all."<sup>3</sup> Feuerlein goes farther.<sup>4</sup> Commenting on the poet's declaration (in his Letter to the Princes and Lords of Italy) that the "authority of Peter and that of Cæsar bifurcates from God as from a single point,"<sup>5</sup> he says: "Dante subjugates the whole framework of society to the theocratic principle." The truth is, that Dante, while subjecting the Empire in certain matters to the

<sup>1</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Dante über Staat und Kirche*, 1842.

<sup>3</sup> "Minime discrepans hac in re a Bellarmino, qui nihil nisi hanc reverentiam Papæ vindicans tamen omnibus ipsum imperare prædicat."—*De Finibus intra Ecclesiam et Civitatem Agendorum Judicia*, 1861, p. 61.

<sup>4</sup> *Dante und die beiden Confessionen*; Sybel, *Hist. Zeitschr.* xxix. p. 53 ff.

<sup>5</sup> "A quo (Deo) velut a puncto bifurcatur Petri Cæsarisque potestas."

Pope, follows the lines of the great fathers and theologians,<sup>1</sup> who teach the independence of the two powers, spiritual and temporal, but only so far as religion and piety permit, and provided nothing be done against the divine precepts, since regard must be had to the last end of man.<sup>2</sup> This truth is explicitly maintained by Dante in the *De Monarchia*,<sup>3</sup> on the ground, as we shall see, that the office of the Emperor is to guide men to temporal well-being, and that of the Pope to point the way to their eternal salvation. His conclusion, therefore, was only the necessary consequence of his premisses. And even this bifurcation of the Empire and the Papacy from the one divine source was not held by Dante to denote equality between them; for the right of the Papacy is divine, and that of the Empire human.<sup>4</sup>

Dante's error lies elsewhere. Resting partly on the teaching of Aristotle, and partly on that of St. Thomas and the legendary history of Rome, he sought from this purely abstract point of view to derive the origin of the Empire from God, and to annihilate the political status of the Church, completely overlooking the historical development both of the Empire and the Papacy. Thus he identifies the Empire of Charlemagne with that of Trajan and Justinian,<sup>5</sup> and ignores the fact that "the Empire was the creation of the Popes, and that the German king only became Emperor

<sup>1</sup> Augustin, *Civ. Dei*, xix. 17, 19: "Quantum salva religione et pietate conceditur. . . Si non est contra divina præcepta."

<sup>2</sup> "The secular power is under the spiritual, in matters wherein it has been so subjected by God, viz., in matters which pertain to salvation. And therefore in these we must obey the spiritual in preference to the temporal authority. But in things pertaining to the welfare of the state (*bonum civile*), we must prefer obedience to the secular power, according to Matt.: 'Give to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's.'"—*Thom. De Regim. Princip.* i. 14 sq. Cf. in ii. *Sent. dist.* 44, q. 2, a. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 16.

<sup>4</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 10: "The foundation of the Church is Christ, but the foundation of the Empire is human right."

<sup>5</sup> *Purg.* vi. 89; *Par.* vi. 11; *De Monarch.* ii.

when crowned by the Pope."<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, his view of the development of the Papacy is equally unhistorical. According to this view, the Pontiff should keep aloof from all political questions, in order to preserve in its purity the poverty and humility of apostolic times. Whereas, to quote Wegele,<sup>2</sup> "It is manifest that under such conditions the Church could never have fulfilled her grand historic mission, could never have educated the barbarous nations had she withdrawn from all contact with the secular powers. Dante's theory, then, is obviously opposed to history, as well as to reason and justice. Judged by the poet's standard, how could even a Pope such as St. Gregory the Great be held blameless? In his indignation against the flagrant abuses of his day, Dante overlooked the cardinal principle of all genuine historical criticism, namely, that a state of things may cease to be necessary or beneficial which once was so in the highest degree."

But, again, in the Middle Ages the lifspring of all thought and custom was the Catholic religion. From the baptism of the poorest child to the chrism on the brow of the sovereign, faith is the pervading principle of all social life. It is the faith which restrains violence, protects the weak, defends the liberties of the people and the rights of kings. Hence the influence on life generally, and on science and education, exercised by the clergy, who alone, for the most part, possessed the essential qualifications of courage and probity. The Pope was, therefore, regarded as the head and father of the Christian commonwealth. And as the reverence for him increased, he became more completely the one arbitrator and judge both of subjects and kings. It was an office which he had neither the power nor the right to refuse, for it was derived from

<sup>1</sup> Warnkönig, *Die staatsrechtliche Stellung der katholischen Kirche in den katholischen Ländern des deutschen Reiches*, 1855, pp. 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.* p. 561.

his spiritual authority. Prince after prince had spontaneously offered him the suzerainty of his dominions. His sway extended over nations whose religious impulses led them voluntarily to subject themselves to his rule.

Yet the century before Dante began the *Commedia*, Frederic the First, encouraged by the jurists of Bologna and fascinated by what he had seen of the despotic power of the Saracen Sultan at Byzantium, was arrogating to himself the absolutism pure and simple of ancient Rome.<sup>1</sup> After Dante's time we find similar claims as strenuously maintained by Marsilius of Padua and Ockham in favour of Louis of Bavaria, in his contest with the Pope. Not only were the liberties of the Church thus endangered, and, with them, the foundation of Christian civilisation, but the future of Europe and the historic constitution of the Empire itself were also threatened with destruction. Seldom in history has the truth of the axiom been so clearly manifested, that the most intelligent and energetic policy must come to nought, if it refuses to take account of the forces at work and strives for the impossible. The indignant retort of Ficker, an acute and discriminating critic, is fully justified when he says: "If Henry at Canossa warns us what must follow from the complete triumph of the spiritual power, the Diet of Wurzburg shows us the reverse of the picture."<sup>2</sup> "Had not the weight of the Church been thrown into the other scale, the Emperor, with his 'Quod principi placuit, legis habet vigorem,'<sup>3</sup>—the will of the prince has the force of law,—would have ridden rough-shod over all the ancient statutes and customs of the realm."<sup>4</sup> This explains why the *De*

<sup>1</sup> "The desire to mimic ancient Rome, and the absurd, pedantic, and puerile hopes of restoring that absolute empire, have perhaps most contributed to lead Italian minds astray, from the fall of the Empire in the fifth century down to our own day."—*C. Balbo, Vita di Dante*, 1853, p. 349.

<sup>2</sup> In 1165, under Frederic I.

<sup>3</sup> L. q. ff. xiv. 2; L. 1, ff. 1, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Von Zezschwitz, *Vom römischen Kaiserthum deutscher Nation*, 1877, p. 24.

*Monarchia* was placed by the Council of Trent upon the Index of forbidden books. Dante's proposition that the Empire depended immediately on God was, as formulated by him, absolutely false.<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly the power of the state is of divine institution,<sup>2</sup> and neither depends on the will of man, nor has its source in the people. But both in regard to the form of government and the persons in whom it is vested, the power of the state is an historic growth, in which the consent of the community and other similar considerations are essential factors. Dante's admission that the imperial authority rests on human right implies, indeed, that, though ordained by God, the Empire does not derive its authority from Him to the exclusion of human intervention. And this decree (of the Council of Trent) is by no means a condemnation of the author as a teacher of heretical views, nor is it even a censure.<sup>3</sup> It merely prohibits the book, as liable to be dangerous in the hands of the enemies of the Church; and similar sentences have, from time to time, been pronounced against works composed by Catholics of the most unquestionable loyalty.

Dante was human, and therefore liable to err. His errors have long since passed into oblivion, but his great work belongs to mankind for all time. As long as one heart on earth beats with love for the sacred things of human nature: freedom, wisdom, faith, so long will the name of the author of the *Divina Commedia* be loved and revered.

<sup>1</sup> "It is therefore clear that the authority of temporal monarchy comes down, with no intermediate will, from the fountain of universal authority. . . . I have unravelled the truth of the questions I asked, . . . whether the authority of the monarch springs immediately from God, or from some other."—*De Monarch.* iii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Rom.* xiii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> As Ozanam understands it. *Loc. cit.* p. 235.



## CHAPTER XI.

## THE CHURCH AND THE EMPIRE.

IN the introductory chapter of this book the word Christendom was used to denote that community of aims and interests, which bound together all the nations of the West. But this united Christendom was dominated by a dual principle, the Empire and the Papacy, and between these two poles the mediæval world was ever balanced. With a shout that rang through St. Peter's, "Health and success to the anointed of God, the most pious, the most noble, and most pacific Emperor," Charlemagne was crowned by Pope Leo III. on Christmas Day of the year 800. Then was inaugurated a magnificent creation, alike of divine providence and human effort. The idea of an *imperium romanum*, that should also be an *imperium mundi*, and subject all nations to Roman law under a single chief, had already floated before the minds of Roman Emperors. With the revival of the imperial dignity in the person of Charlemagne, this idea was not only realised, but consecrated and endowed with deeper significance by the spirit of Catholicism. On the accession of Otho the Great, the Holy Roman Empire became also German, since the occupant of the imperial throne was henceforth to be a German prince. But this Empire was to be Christian, an *imperium christianitatis*. Not for his own interests, or as the lord of the soil, or as an absolute monarch, was the Roman Emperor to wield the sceptre. He was to be the

steward of Christendom, the mediator between Christian princes, the guardian of peace, the protector of the widow and orphan, the avenger of all injustice. His Empire was doubly distinguished from that of ancient Rome by the consecrating sanction of the Church, which implied a limitation to its sway, and by the German liberties incorporated therewith. The unity of the Church was the model of the union of the nations in the Empire, and Catholicism was the Magna Charta of the German brotherhood. The Roman Emperor, therefore, is always the augmentor of the Empire, *semper Augustus*, because he gathers all the newly won nations into the Christian commonwealth. "*Roma, caput mundi, regit frena orbis rotundi*,"—"Rome, head of the world, governs the whole earth,"—was the motto on the seals of the German Empire; and the bond of its various nationalities, German, Roman, and Slav, was the Catholic faith. The Emperor himself was "the devout defender and humble ally of Holy Church."<sup>1</sup> It was his duty, as set forth in the prayer of Good Friday, to defend Christendom against the infidels, subjecting to the Church principalities and powers. But as the Pope is the Head of the Church, he alone, by unction and coronation, could confer the imperial dignity, and, with it, the title of *Advocatus Ecclesiæ*, advocate of the Church. One Pope, one Emperor, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one kingdom of God on earth, with the Emperor as its chief

<sup>1</sup> "Devotus sanctæ Ecclesiæ defensor humilisque adjutor."—*Præf. cap. i. ap. Baluz.* i. p. 475. King Pepin had exercised the right of protectorate as a Roman patrician; the Emperor assumed it in his own name, and as his special office. From the time of Otho's coronation his title is: "Defender of the Church,"—"Advocatus Ecclesiæ S. Petri efficitur" (Thietmar, *Chron. ap. Pertz. Monum. Germ.* v. p. 775). The Pope interrogated Henry II. before his coronation: "if he would be a faithful patron and defender of the Roman Church;" and in the Coronation-service the Church prays "the Lord God to render subject to him all unbelieving nations, for our perpetual peace, and that the people who trust in their own strength may be brought under, by the power of Thy Right Hand."—*Thietm. loc. cit. cap. i. p. 836.*

for temporal ends, and the Pope for spiritual, this was the mediæval conception of the Empire and the Papacy. Thus the Pope and the Emperor are, respectively, the exponents of the unity of the faith, and the unity of law and power. This idea of a universal monarchy pervaded all mediæval thought. It was inscribed on the banner of Islam, with its one God, one book of the law, for both spiritual and temporal things, one Prophet, and one head of the faithful, his successor the Caliph. And more than once, to all human seeming, whether Mahomet or Christ should possess the world hung on the issue of a single battle.

Hence it became an accepted principle of public law that princes, and more especially the Emperor, if guilty of heresy or excommunicated, and thus cut off from the Christian commonwealth, were regarded as incapable of exercising any public function; and if they continued contumacious, their subjects were thenceforth released from their duty of obedience. Princes and nations often protested against the justice of the sentence in their own case, but the principle itself was never questioned.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The Church may declare the prince unfit to rule who violates the laws of Christ and the Church," even Dupin acknowledges (*Antiqu. Eccles. Discipl.* diss. vi. 2). According to St. Thomas, subjects are *ipso facto* absolved from obedience to a prince who is excommunicated as a heretic, but the sentence releasing them must be first pronounced by the Pope (S. ii. 2. q. 12, a. 2); the prince then becomes no longer a legitimate ruler, but a tyrant (Bianchi, *Della Polizia della Chiesa*, tom. ii. l. v. a. 12). Obviously, however, this right was only exercised by the Pope in Catholic countries (Bellarm. *De Sum. Pontiff.* v. 5), in virtue of the consent of Christian nations, which acknowledged in the Pope the supreme judge of Christendom. Now that the Christian republic of nations no longer exists, this consequence of excommunications has also lapsed, as Pius IX. declared in his address to the Academia. "The right (of deposing sovereigns) has been sometimes exercised by the Popes in extreme circumstances, but it has nothing to do with infallibility, nor does it spring from infallibility, but from the authority itself of the Vicar of Christ. In accordance with ancient public law and the agreement of Christian nations, who revered in the Pope the supreme judge of Christendom, this authority reached so far as to judge, even in civil matters, princes and states. But the present conditions are absolutely different, and only malice could confuse the

Five hundred years had elapsed from the coronation of Charlemagne, when Dante wrote his poem; the mighty edifice of the Roman Empire was shaken to its foundations, and its violent conflicts with the Papacy had brought universal distress and insecurity. Amid the turbid stream of human passions, the ideals of the great Emperors and Popes had been sorely disfigured. Forgetting the origin, mission, and duties of the imperial dignity, and dazzled by the illusory splendour of Oriental despotism, the Emperors, and far more the later Ghibellines, had endeavoured to make of the Church a base and servile tool. Where they struck with the temporal sword, the Pope was to follow with the spiritual, and to brand as heretics men who were only defending their just rights. The highest interests of the Church were thus threatened. The Popes were forced to fight, to free themselves from the strangling embrace of the Empire. "All great Popes," says La Guerronnière,<sup>1</sup> "were Guelphs;" all the best and noblest men, from the time of St. Peter Damian to St. Bernard, took the same side. And it is in a tone of deep satisfaction that Gregory IX., in his letter to the Patriarch Germanus, points out the actual separation of the two powers, con-

two things and times, as if infallible judgment on a principle of revelation had the smallest affinity with a right which the Popes, called thereto by the wish of the people, had to exercise when the general good required it. But it is plainly to be seen why so absurd an idea, of which no one thinks, and the Sovereign Pontiff least of all, is now propagated. It is to excite princes against the Church that this is done."—*Trans. Tablet*, August 5, 1871. Here the Pope speaks of the right as springing from the authority itself of the Vicar of Christ, but a right which, in the altered circumstances of modern times, he would never think of exercising.

<sup>1</sup> La Guerronnière, *Le Pape et le Congrès*, c. 3. So also Derichsweiler, *Das politische System Dante's*, 1874, p. 31. "There can be no doubt, then, that the Church was forced to emancipate herself from the subjection to which the Salic princes had reduced her, as a tool for political ends." Again, Gregory IX.: "The Greek Church, which was free, has become the servant of the secular power."—*Letters, Raynald*, a. a. 1239, 52.

trasting it with the Greek Church, which had become the slave of the temporal power.

The view which conferred both swords,<sup>1</sup> the spiritual and the temporal, on the successors of Peter, was not only held by St. Bernard,<sup>2</sup> but was the one which prevailed in the twelfth century among all who looked at things from an ideal point of view. The power of the Pope is the highest on earth, subject only to the laws of God and nature; the spiritual power is exercised by himself alone; the secular, mainly through the instrumentality of laymen. On the one hand, he must be the model of justice, the mirror of sanctity, the type of charity, the defender of the faith, the teacher of the heathen, the guide of Christendom. So also, according to St. Bernard, he is "the scourge of the proud, the rod of tyrants, the father of kings, the master of the laws, the dispenser of the canon, the anointed of the Lord God over Pharaoh."<sup>3</sup>

Just at the time when the Empire was tottering to its fall, Philip the Fair appeared as the champion of nationalism, a wholly new and aggressive principle. This coincidence was, however, far from accidental. The imperial attacks on the Papacy had driven the Popes to turn to France for

<sup>1</sup> Thus the ancient code of Swabian law: "The Pope holds both swords from God; the secular he hands over to the Emperor, the spiritual he keeps for himself."—*Vorr*, art. 9, 10. The old Saxon code, on the contrary, gives the spiritual sword to the Pope, the temporal to the Emperor.

<sup>2</sup> St. Bernard says: "Peter must make use of both swords, for both belong to him; the one should be drawn at his bidding, the other by his own hand."—*Ep.* 256. "Both swords, the spiritual and the material, belong to the Church; the first is to be used by the Church, the second for the Church; the first by the hand of the priest, the second by the hand of the soldier, but at the bidding of the priest and the command of the Emperor, *ad jussum imperatoris*."—*De Considerat.* iv. 3. Thus was expressed in general terms the concord between the spiritual and temporal powers. It was not until the fourteenth century that this began to be questioned; and, as with Dante in the *De Monarch.* iii. 9, the argument employed was founded on an allegory.

<sup>3</sup> *Loc. cit.* Cf. Giesebrecht, *Kaisergeschichte*, iv. p. 366.

aid, and henceforth the French king bore the title of the "Most Christian Monarch." The Crusades, which had awakened the consciousness of Europe, were concluded, and the people turned from the far East to their domestic affairs. Commerce and industrial enterprise had introduced a new element into civic life, and especially in Italy a flourishing middle class had sprung up. The late wars had brought the Western nations into contact with Oriental civilisation, and this, again, imparted a new character to the aspirations of the people; a character which Dante laments, as tending to moral degeneracy:

"The city's malady hath ever source  
In the confusion of its persons, as  
The body's, in variety of food."—*Par.* xvi. 66.

The national principle brought with it national selfishness, and jealousies and international wars soon followed. At the close of every epoch in the history of the world, the idea which is passing away almost always inspires some great genius to manifest it in all its splendour, ere it sets for ever. Thus the idea of the Empire took possession of Dante's mind, which he develops in the *De Monarchia*, and expresses in the scholastic language of the day.

German writers also lamented the fall of the universal Empire—Leopold von Bebenburg in 1350, and before him Abbot Engelbert von Admont in 1297; but none deplored it so intensely as Dante. While they foretell the complete downfall of the Empire in the near future, Dante clings to the hope that it will revive in all its ancient glory; and he joyfully greets as its restorer the Emperor Henry VII. of Luxemburg.<sup>1</sup> Nor does he doubt

<sup>1</sup> "Arise now," he writes to Henry VII. in 1311, "delay no longer, thou noble stem of Jesse; be of good courage, for the eyes of the Lord, the God of Sabaoth, are upon thee. Strike down this Goliath (Florence) with the sling of thy wisdom and the stone of thy power; for when he falls, the shadow and night of fear will fall on the camp of the Philistines

for a moment that the Empire will save society ; for though in itself a human institution, it has been ordained and destined by Divine Providence for the welfare of mankind, and to be the protector of His Church.<sup>1</sup> When Church and Empire fulfil their divine mission, Italy and the world are at peace. When either fail in their purpose, mankind are deprived of their proper guidance and confusion ensues :

"Thus the cause  
Is not corrupted nature in yourselves,  
But ill-conducting, that hath turn'd the world  
To evil."—*Purg.* xvi. 106.

Pagan Rome, as the seat of the Empire, was an instrument of divine purpose ; but, converted to Christ, the city became the centre of the Church and the See of the Pope :

"Thou hast told that Silvius' sire,  
Yet clothed in corruptible flesh, among  
The immortal tribes had entrance, and was there  
Sensibly present.<sup>2</sup> Yet if Heaven's great Lord,  
Almighty foe to ill, such favour show'd,  
In contemplation of the high effect,  
But what and who from Him should issue forth,<sup>3</sup>  
It seems in reason's judgment well deserved ;  
Sith he of Rome and of Rome's Empire wide,  
In Heaven's empyreal height was chosen sire :

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(the Italian cities) ; the Philistines will flee, and Israel will be delivered. Then the inheritance, of which we have been despoiled, and which we unceasingly lament, will be restored to us ; and as now, like the exiles of Babylon, we weep when we remember Jerusalem, so then shall we exceedingly rejoice, dwelling in peace in our cities."

<sup>1</sup> "The foundation of the Empire is human right."—*De Monarch.* iii. 10. Therefore the Empire is not of God in the same sense as the Papacy, which rests on a positive, divinely given right. The Church is not an effect of nature, but of God, Who said : "Upon this rock I will build My Church."—*Ibid.* iii. 14 ; cf. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Æneas, the father of Silvius, visited Hades in his mortal flesh. (*Æneid*, vi.)

<sup>3</sup> What and who (*il chi e il quale*) denotes the successors of Æneas and their qualities.

Both which,<sup>1</sup> if truth be spoken, were ordain'd  
 And stablish'd for the holy place, where sits  
 Who to great Peter's<sup>2</sup> sacred chair succeeds.  
 He from this journey, in thy song renown'd,  
 Learn'd things, that to his victory gave rise  
 And to the papal robe."—*Hell*, ii. 14.

St. Augustine,<sup>3</sup> Orosius,<sup>4</sup> Pope Leo the Great,<sup>5</sup> and more especially Prudentius,<sup>6</sup> had already pointed out God's providential guidance in the foundation and history of Rome, by which she was made the mistress of the world for the promulgation and spread of Christianity. Dante adopts this idea, and thus tersely expresses it. Rome is the centre of the Church, and the institution of the Church is the end of the history of the world, and the purpose of the Empire is to afford a secure asylum to the successor of Peter. This thought is allegorically expressed in the figure of the mystic chariot, which is the Church; the chariot pole which draws it is the Papacy. The Gryphon, Christ, binds this to the withered tree,<sup>7</sup> which forthwith

"As when large floods of radiance from above  
 Stream, with that radiance mingled, which ascends  
 Next after setting of the scaly sign,<sup>8</sup>  
 Our plants then burgein, and each wears anew  
 His wonted colours, ere the sun have yoked  
 Beneath another star his flamy steeds;  
 Thus putting forth a hue more faint than rose,

<sup>1</sup> Both (*la quale e il quale*) Rome and the Empire.

<sup>2</sup> The Fathers frequently call the Pope, from his office as successor of the Apostle, simply "Peter," and the Apostle himself "the greater Peter."

<sup>3</sup> Augustin. *Civ. Dei*, vii. *pass.*

<sup>4</sup> Oros. *Hist.* v. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Leon. M., *Serm.* ii. in *Epiph.*, *Serm.* i. in *Navit. S. Petr.*

<sup>6</sup> Prudentius, *C. Symmach.* li. 582 sq.

<sup>7</sup> The tree which the poet sees is the tree of knowledge in Paradise, and typifies the Roman Empire. Cf. *Dan.* iv. 17, 20. The Chair of Peter was founded in Rome, and belongs to Rome.

<sup>8</sup> Constellation of Pisces, that is, at the time of the Spring Equinox.



And deeper than the violet, was renew'd  
The plant, erewhile in all its branches bare."

—*Purg.* xxxii. 51.

Rome therefore possesses two suns :

"Rome, that turn'd it unto good,  
Was wont to boast two suns, whose several beams  
Cast light on either way, the world's and God's."

—*Purg.* xvi. 109.

The fatal policy of Rudolph and Albert of Hapsburg, which abandoned Italy to herself and left her a prey to civic factions, was the cause of all this misery. The poet draws, as we have seen, a melancholy picture of the desolation of his country, for which Guelphs and Ghibellines are alike responsible. The Guelphs attack the rights of the Empire, the Ghibellines grasp them for themselves; the one oppose the standard of the fleur-de-lys to that of the eagle; the other, under pretence of fighting for the eagle, seek only their own petty interests :

"So that 'tis hard to see who most offends."

—*Par.* vi. 106.

Therefore Italy and the world pine for an Emperor, to restore order and bring peace :<sup>1</sup>

We will now examine the *De Monarchia* in detail, taking the three books in order.

One universal monarchy, according to the first book of the *De Monarchia*, is the necessary result both of the unity of the human race and of the divine empire of the universe.

<sup>1</sup> Hence Dante addresses the Princes and the Republics, who wage war against the Empire, in the words of the Psalmist: "Why have the Gentiles raged, and the people devised vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes met together, against the Lord and against His Christ; let us break their bonds asunder, and let us cast their yoke from us."—*Ps.* ii. 1-3; *De Monarch.* ii. 1.

For man is not made to vegetate, like the plants, nor merely to feel, like the brutes, but to gain knowledge through the reason with which he is endowed, but which has to be developed by acts. Man, however, by himself cannot explore the whole range of theoretical and practical science, but can only do so in society with his fellows;<sup>1</sup> and therefore, for the development of human reason and the fulfilment of his sublime vocation, man must live in peace. Hence that which was announced to the shepherds from above was not riches, nor pleasure, nor honour, nor length of days, nor health, nor strength, nor beauty; but peace. For the heavenly host sang: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good-will."<sup>2</sup>

Rightly is the Emperor styled: "The one ruler over all in time, or in and above all that is measurable by time." According to Aristotle, "Where a number of things are arranged in order to attain an end, it behoves one of them to regulate or govern the others, and the rest to be governed."<sup>3</sup> Now since the whole human race is destined to one end, there must be one to rule and govern it, that is, the Emperor. And all communities which are parts of one kingdom, as well as the kingdom itself, must be under that one imperial rule:<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The special faculty of man is that of comprehending by the passive intellect, and this faculty cannot be wholly set in action, save by multitude in the human race. . . . The proper work of the human race is to bring unceasingly into act the whole potentiality of the passive intellect."—*De Monarch.* i. 3, 4. "It is necessary for men to live together (*in multitudinem*), both for their mutual assistance, and that by the diverse occupations which their rational nature finds for them, each man may have his proper aim."—*Thom. de Regim. Princip.* i. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *De Monarch.* i. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Conv.* iv. 4.

<sup>4</sup> "When a multitude of men live together, their welfare and safety depend on the preservation of their unity, and this is called peace. . . . But this unity is evidently better obtained by that which is itself one, than by that which is of many, and therefore the government of one individual excels that of many persons."—*De Regim. Princip.* i. 2.

“‘Say, were it worse for man,  
If he lived not in fellowship on earth?’  
Yea,’ answer’d I; ‘nor here a reason needs.’”

—*Par. viii. 120.*

“By this form of government, then, can man best attain to that perfection which consists in his likeness to God, and to that unity which emanates from God, who is One Himself. Of this unity the Emperor is the centre and foundation, so that the Empire corresponds most fully to the divine ideal and to the end of man, and mankind, as a whole, becomes an image of Heaven, being ruled by one prince . . . and one law.”<sup>1</sup> The opposite of peace is strife, and as long as the contending parties, princes and people, are independent of each other, strife will last. Hence, again, arises the necessity of the Emperor as a supreme judge, to whom all are subject. As Aristotle well says, “In a multitude of rulers there is evil; therefore let there be one prince.”<sup>2</sup> Again, the decisions between contending parties must bear the stamp of justice, and the nature of justice is to be ever the same and to suffer neither more nor less;<sup>3</sup> but in practice it admits of degrees of purity, which happens either when the will is not free from inordinate desire, or not strong enough to enforce what justice demands. “For, seeing that justice is a virtue regulating our conduct towards other men, how shall any act according to justice if he have not the power of rendering to all their due?”<sup>4</sup> It follows, then, that earthly justice is strongest when vested in one who has the purest will and sovereign power, that is, in the Emperor; for in him are united the two conditions for its free and unfettered

<sup>1</sup> *De Monarch. i. 9.*

<sup>2</sup> *Aristot. Metaph. xii. 10.* Cf. *Homer, Iliad, ii. 204.*

<sup>3</sup> *De Monarch. i. 11.*

<sup>4</sup> *De Monarch. i. 11.* According to St. Thomas, justice is the habit by which a man gives to each his right, with the constant and abiding intention of so doing. *S. ii. 2. q. 58, a. 1.*

administration, disinterestedness and might. The Emperor is not tempted to greed; his dominion is not bounded by other lands, like that of minor princes,<sup>1</sup> but by the ocean alone. Being lord of all, he desires nought.

In the heaven of Jupiter the poet beholds the choir of blessed spirits ranged in form of a fiery scroll, upon which is inscribed: "Diligite justitiam, qui judicatis terram,"—"Love justice, ye that are judges of the earth:"<sup>2</sup>

"The characters,  
Vocal and consonant, were five-fold seven.  
In order, each, as they appear'd, I mark'd.  
'Diligite justitiam,' the first,  
Both verb and noun all blazon'd; and the extreme,  
'Qui judicatis terram.'"—*Par.* xviii. 81.

Again, while covetousness dulls the sense of justice, charity sharpens it. Covetousness despises human society, and "seeks for other things outside it. Charity seeks only God and the good of men, and despises all else. And this presents another proof of the superiority of the imperial justice. For while other princes care only for their respective subjects, and are united to them mediately through the monarch, the care of the Emperor extends to all men, and his relations with them are primary and direct. He is the first and supreme cause of tranquillity and power; theirs is derived from him as from the fount: he desires, therefore, more earnestly than those who are mere

<sup>1</sup> Dante addresses the Emperor Henry VII. in similar terms. "The Roman power was not limited by the boundaries of Italy, nor by the coast of three-horned Europe. True, under adverse pressure Rome withdrew her ships on all sides, yet in the exercise of her inalienable right she still navigated the billows of Amphitrites, and refused to be circumscribed by the empty waves of ocean. For it is written:

"Then Caesar from the Julian stock shall rise,  
Whose empire ocean, and whose fame the skies  
Alone shall bound."—*Rn.* i. 39."

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Wisd.* i. 1.

intermediaries that justice may be done. His right to the supreme administration is implied in his very name of monarch; for a real monarch has no enemies."<sup>1</sup> Justice, the most admirable of virtues, is the brightest jewel of the imperial crown, and even those who transgress it most, as thieves and robbers, according to Aristotle, hold it in esteem.<sup>2</sup> Thus in the circle of Jupiter, Dante beholds the glory of this imperial virtue, which, apart from the Emperor,<sup>3</sup> languishes "like a heliotrope deprived of sunshine."<sup>4</sup>

By his just administration the Emperor offers a guardianship for true freedom, man's highest good:

"Supreme of gifts, which God, creating, gave  
Of His free bounty, sign most evident  
Of goodness, and in His account most prized,  
Was liberty of will; the boon, wherewith  
All intellectual creatures, and them sole,  
He hath endow'd."—*Par.* v. 18.

Now, "he alone is free who exists, not for another's sake, but for his own. For everything which exists for the sake of some other thing is under its dominion." But man can only enjoy true freedom under imperial rule, for "the Emperor loves his subjects, and desires the spiritual good of all men." Indeed, freedom signifies a state wherein it is possible for man to become good. The Emperor is sole guardian of freedom, "whilst democratic republics, oligarchies, and tyrannies drive men into slavery." "But citizens exist, not for the good of consuls, nor the nation for the

<sup>1</sup> *De Monarch.* l. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Conv.* l. 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Par.* xviii. 70-117.

<sup>4</sup> *To the Princes and Lords of Italy.* St. Thomas enlarges the same thought (*De Regim. Princip.* l. 9) when he says that "the eternal reward that God will bestow upon His earthly representatives is the supreme and ultimate motive, which impels the monarch to be just. But since a pre-eminent degree of virtue is requisite in order that he may govern justly, that is, without respect to any personal advantages, therefore a just prince merits a far higher reward than others."

good of its king, but the consuls for the good of the citizens, and the king for the good of his nation. For as the laws are made for the state, and not the state for the laws, so those who live under the laws do not take their direction from the legislator, but he from them." "Hence, too, it is clear that though the king or consul rule over the other citizens in respect of the means of government, yet in respect of the end of government they are the servants of the citizens, and especially the monarch, who without doubt, must be held the servant of all."<sup>1</sup>

Again, as it belongs to God to obtain great results by few means, the imperial rule is a benefit in strict harmony with the divine operations in nature; the rule of many, on the contrary, is an evil. But the Empire must not degenerate into a rigid centralisation, for the Emperor is only the highest authority in the commonwealth of nations, which comprises the most divergent states and forms of government. Natural, climatic, and historic differences are, therefore, not to be obliterated by a code of laws sharply defined, and imposed by the will of the Emperor alike upon all. "When we say that mankind may be ruled by one supreme prince, we do not mean that the most trifling judgments for each particular town are to proceed immediately from him; for municipal laws sometimes fail and need guidance. . . . Nations and kingdoms have each of them certain peculiarities, which must be regulated by different laws. . . . Thus the Scythians need one rule, for they . . . suffer cold which is almost unbearable; whilst the Garamantes need a different law, for their country is equinoctial. . . . But our meaning is, that, in matters common to all, men should be ruled by one monarch, and be governed by a common

<sup>1</sup> *De Monarch.* i. 12. "Laws are just as regards their end, when they are ordained to the common good."—*S.* i. 2. q. 94, a. 4. According to St. Thomas, a man is free who is his own end, and a slave who, with what he is, belongs to another (*qui quod est, alterius est*).—*De Regim. Princip.* i. 1.

rule, with a view to their peace. And the individual princes must receive their rule of life or law from him."<sup>1</sup>

When the will of the Emperor becomes the rule and guide of all men, true union, which consists in the "uniform motion of many wills" towards one common aim, shall be re-established upon earth.<sup>2</sup> Thus we find that when Christ our Lord was born, Augustus being then Emperor of Rome, for the first time since Adam's fall reigned universal peace. Then was in truth "the fulness of time," when not only Heaven, but earth itself was, as Holy Scripture itself attests, prepared to receive its Saviour;<sup>3</sup> and Divine Providence brought about this blessed condition of the world, by and in the universal monarchy of the Roman Emperor.

Dante concludes the first book of the *De Monarchia* by an earnest appeal to the princes and peoples of his time. "How the world has fared since that seamless robe has been rent by the claws of ambition, we may read in books; would that we saw not with our own eyes. O race of man! storm-tossed and shipwrecked must thou be, as long as thou art a beast of many heads and strivest after contrary things. Thy higher and thy lower reason are diseased; not even the sweetness of divine persuasion charms thy heart, when, through the music of the Holy Spirit, it breathes into thee: 'Behold how good and how pleasant a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity!'"<sup>4</sup> "O miserable rulers!" he exclaimed to his contemporaries, "and most miserable ye who are ruled! Search as you will, ask whom you will, you will find no authority of reason to defend your rule. To you the Preacher cries: 'Woe unto thee, O land, when thy king is a child!' Whilst to none can be said what follows: 'O blessed is the land whose king is noble!' Take heed, O ye enemies of God! who have seized upon the sceptres of Italy. I say to you kings, Charles and Frederic, and to

<sup>1</sup> *De Monarch.* i. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Contr.* iv. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *De Monarch.* i. 15.

<sup>4</sup> *De Monarch.* i. 16.

you also, princes and tyrants, look well to those who sit beside you in the council, and reckon how often your advisers have shown you the true end of life. Better far to fly low like the swallows, than like vultures to circle on high over the basest things."<sup>1</sup>

Thus in the constitution of the already fallen Empire, Dante traced the outlines of his political theory. Weighed down by the miseries of his country and the feuds of its people, and starting from the ideas of Aristotle and St. Thomas, he grasped with his whole energy the fading ideal of an universal empire, and set it forth, idealised and transformed, as the only hope of deliverance for Italy. His prince is not, as Machiavelli would have him, a political compound of cunning and fraud; not a despot, like the *Leviathan* of Hobbes, brandishing his iron sceptre over a gang of slaves; not a Louis XIV., crying, "L'état c'est moi;" still less a Frederick II. with his Oriental theories of life and morals, who would sever the necessary union of the imperial authority and philosophy,<sup>2</sup> and give independence to the nation only as a means to make himself supreme. An Emperor of Dante's type is no grasping oppressor, but the impersonation of justice and charity, and from him, as from an exalted and living centre, the world would be renewed.

Dante's scheme of an universal monarchy rests upon general and abstract principles, consistently embodied in his ideal Emperor. It is the ideal of the philosopher, theologian, and poet, rather than of a statesman, who has to deal with facts and to seek what is practical. His poetic genius raises him above the bounds of historic development; his ideal does not correspond with the

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* iv. 6. "Awake! all ye inhabitants of Italy, and rise up to meet him, and offer him not only your obedience, but also, as free men, the government (*come liberi il reggimento*)."—*To the Princes and Lords of Italy.*

<sup>2</sup> *Conv.* iv. 5, 6.



realities of life. In this he is the direct opposite of his countryman, Machiavelli, who exalts success, and all that tends towards it, as the sole rule of government. Machiavelli's prince is the symptom of a national life infected by a false pagan civilisation, combined with perfidiousness and unbridled barbarism. Dante's theory of politics is founded upon the right, and informed with the idea of justice. The right to him is nothing else than the likeness of God's will, as it exists first in the mind of God and is one with His Being.<sup>1</sup> But whatever does not agree with the Divine Will cannot be right, nor can its issue be blessed. Thus the Emperor who proclaims the right is, in the highest sense, God's instrument upon earth. Machiavelli's prince knows nothing of the right, except so far as it serves his plans, and morality has no place in his politics. Dante's soars on high, and points out to the nations the way of deliverance. Machiavelli's crawls serpent-wise, and enslaves the people under the bondage of tyranny. Yet several reigning powers of his time adopted his policy and attempted to justify it, while Dante's theories produced no result. Like Plato's state, they were merely the dreams of an aspiring and noble nature. Machiavelli's maxims, on the contrary, found support in the strong passions of his age, and spread their baneful influence far and wide among princes and people. Both men strove alike for the unity of Italy, but by very different means. Dante, the most Italian of Italians, invited the Germans to take possession of his country to secure its lasting peace. In him the cosmopolitanism of the Middle Ages triumphs. Free from merely selfish nationalism, he embraces all men in one universal idea, because that idea is Christian and divine. Machiavelli conceives a united Italy under the sway of a tyrant, with energy and power to enforce his will. Accordingly he extols Borgia, and denounces the Papacy

<sup>1</sup> *De Monarch.* ii. 2.

for having prevented the unity of Italy. He speaks as if Milan and Florence would not, apart from the Pope, have jealously defended their own independence. He ignores the fact, that Italy's high early civilisation was largely due to that very varied independent polity of her different cities ; and says nothing of the disasters to the Church and the Pope himself, which would have followed from a tyrant of Machiavelli's type. Yet the unity which Machiavelli strove to realise in the domain of politics, Dante had already created in the inner and nobler life of his nation through its language and literature ; and in comparison with this higher unity, mere political centralisation was for him of little moment. But Dante's ideal Emperor is, further, a religious and consecrated person. To him he refers those passages of Holy Scripture, which the Church only applies to Christ. He is "He that is to come," "the lofty One of the stem of Juda," "the Lamb of God."<sup>1</sup> The Empire appears to him radiant with celestial glory, so that great indeed is their guilt who obstruct its light and trouble this divine order :

"Thus more than thousand twinkling lustres hence  
Seem'd reascending, and a higher pitch  
Some mounting, and some less, e'en as the sun,  
Which kindleth them, decreed. And when each one  
Had settled in his place ; the head and neck  
Then saw I of an eagle, livelily  
Graved in that streaky fire.

Sweet star ! what glorious and thick-studded gems  
Declared to me our justice on the earth  
To be the effluence of that Heaven, which thou,  
Thyself a costly jewel, dost inlay."—*Par.* xviii. 95.

Even when, with Henry VII.'s death, the realisation of his ideal had vanished, the poet still hoped on. Beatrice thus predicts its future glory : <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Luke vii. 20 ; Isai. xlix. 7 ; John i. 29 ; Apoc. v. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. above, p. 232.

"Without an heir for ever shall not be  
 That eagle, he, who left the chariot plumed,  
 Which monster made it first and next a prey,  
 Plainly I view, and therefore speak, the stars  
 E'en now approaching, whose conjunction, free  
 From all impediment and bar, brings on  
 A season, in the which, one sent from God,  
 (Five hundred, five, and ten, do mark him out),  
 That foul one, and the accomplice of her guilt,  
 The giant, both shall slay."—*Purg.* xxxiii. 37.

But this exaggerated conception of an universal imperial power reveals the source whence it sprung, and also of Dante's error in his whole scheme of politics. All the religious enthusiasm of the preceding age for the Church and her Head, Dante sought to reawaken for the Empire. All that the Pope was intended to be, and for centuries had been, in the minds of Christian people, in the consciousness of the nations—"the rock of justice," "the dispenser of peace," "the avenger of wrong," "the judge of disputants,"<sup>1</sup>—all this was now to be transferred to the Emperor; and this all the more, because of the increasing divisions among the German princes. Hence the task which Dante sets before the Emperor, and the religious cultus which he offers to him, simply indicate the reaction against that very influence of the Popes in politics, which Dante condemned. His own theory, restricting their authority to matters purely spiritual, is, as we have seen, not only erroneous, but wholly incompatible with the development of the Church, the progress of Western civilisation, and the conditions of national life in the preceding centuries. Thus his ideal Emperor could never be other

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Joan. Saresb. *Polycrat.* viii. 23; Bernard, *Ep.* 199 *ad Innoc.* II.; Petr. Venerab. vi. *Ep.* 28 *ad Eugen.* III.: "Your throne is that of which it is said, 'Justice and judgment are the preparation of thy throne' (Ps. lxxxviii. 15); and again, 'Thy right hand is full of justice' (Ps. xlvii. 11); and once more, 'Who executeth judgment for them that suffer wrong' (Ps. cxlv. 7).

than a poetic fiction, for it was absolutely opposed to the thoughts and requirements of the nations. Suarez says,<sup>1</sup> "Whatever power the Emperor may have, for the sake of defending the Church, to summon the Catholic princes and call them to arms, and whatever like authority he may possess to settle disputes among them; yet he derives this power, if it does exist, from the Pope. Although the Emperor, for a long period, alone bore the title of Majesty and occupied the first place among all peoples; yet they always maintained their independent rights."

Less interest attaches to the second book of the *De Monarchia*, in which Dante endeavours to prove that the Empire belongs of right to Rome. According to him, reason and revelation alike declared that city the seat of empire. He quotes Virgil<sup>2</sup> to show that Æneas was fitted to be the founder of Rome no less by his talents and virtues than by his noble birth, and that miracles further confirmed his sway. The shield which fell from Heaven whilst Numa Pompilius offered sacrifice;<sup>3</sup> the timely warning of the geese, which saved the Capitol from the Gauls;<sup>4</sup> the hail-storm which arrested Hannibal and his victorious troops;<sup>5</sup> the escape of the captive Clelia across the Tiber, during the siege of Rome by Porsenna;<sup>6</sup>—all these marked the divine approval of Æneas, and of the capital of his choice. That the Romans, as Cicero declares, made use of this world-wide dominion for the good of mankind<sup>7</sup> is proved by the noble examples of Cincinnatus, Fabricius, Camillus, the elder Brutus, Mucius Scævola, the Decii, Cato, and others.

But further, the course of history clearly shows the divine will, that the empire of the world should belong to Rome. That Empire had no previous existence. Alexander

<sup>1</sup> Suarez, *De Leg.* iii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Æn.* i. 544, vi. 166, viii. 134, iii. 339, iv. 171, xii. 936.

<sup>3</sup> Lucan, *Pharsal.* ix. 477.

<sup>4</sup> Liv. v. 47; *Æn.* viii. 652.

<sup>5</sup> Oros. *Hist.* iv. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Liv. ii. 13.

<sup>7</sup> Cicero. *De Offic.* ii. 8.

the Great, who attempted to found it, died in the midst of his enterprise. Rome alone, says Boethius,<sup>1</sup> won the prize, as St. Luke also testifies.<sup>2</sup> Again, Rome was always victorious in single combat, that direct appeal to God's judgment, which is authorised to give sentence<sup>3</sup> when no human judge duly qualified can be invoked. Thus, in the several combats between Æneas and Turnus, king of the Rutuli, the Horatii and Curiatii, the Sabines and Samnites, God always pronounced in favour of Rome.

Finally, Christ Himself, the Representative of the whole human race, testified to the legality of Rome's sovereignty, in that He obeyed the decree of Augustus, went up to be numbered, paid the imperial taxes, and, under Tiberius, suffered death upon the Cross. For that death could not have been a perfect satisfaction for Adam's sin, unless ordained as its just punishment by legal authority. But as these conditions were fulfilled, in perfect truth was the cry uttered, "Consummatum est." The Roman Empire, then, according to Dante, had a divine origin. Not direct, as that of the Church, from Christ through the vocation of Peter; but indirect, in so far as God has declared His will in the course of history. The will of God is indeed in itself invisible, but "the invisible things of Him are

<sup>1</sup> "Yet spreads her sceptral away o'er all the race  
Which Phœbus bathes with light, in farthest East,  
And Trion's seven bind fast in chains of frost,  
And hot solrocco burns in scorching sand."

—*Boeth. De Consol.* ii. Met. 6.

<sup>2</sup> "And it came to pass that in those days there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus; that the whole world should be enrolled."—*Luke* iii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Single combat by way of ordeal was a recognised tribunal among German nations. The practice had ecclesiastical sanction only, when, by a compromise between opposing commanders, a general action was thereby averted. But in other cases, to discover a truth or settle a dispute, the Church opposed it. Cf. *Thom. in Aristot. Polit.* iv. 16. The custom was only tolerated conditionally, with a view to its entire abolition.

clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made."<sup>1</sup> For when the seal is out of sight, the wax which has its impression gives manifest evidence of it, though it be unseen.

St. Paul in the above passage confirms our view, for he speaks of the knowledge of God gained from the contemplation of His works. For as the revelation of God in creation, which is manifest to all men, is not, in the true sense of the word, a revelation, so neither is a monarchy or empire a divine institution, except in a wide sense, in so far as it is an expression of the Divine Will, revealing itself in nature and history, and therefore in a manner which is incomplete :

"Were the wax  
Moulded with nice exactness, and the Heaven  
In its disposing influence supreme,  
The brightness of the seal should be complete :  
But Nature renders it imperfect ever ;  
Resembling thus the artist, in her work,  
Whose faltering hand is faithless to his skill."

—*Par.* xiii. 67.

Thus it was under the guidance of Providence that Rome became the seat of the Papacy, and of the Empire :

"Rome, that turn'd it into good,  
Was wont to boast two suns, whose several beams  
Cast light on either way, the world's and God's."

—*Purg.* xvi. 109.

According to the views of Dante and his contemporaries, it was equally impossible to imagine either an Empire or a Papacy without Rome.

In the third book, which is by far the most important of the treatise, Dante attempts to solve the question, "Does the authority of the Roman monarch, who,

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 20.

as we have proved in the second book, is the monarch of the world, depend immediately on God, or on some minister or vicar of God; by whom I understand the successor of Peter, who truly has the keys of the kingdom of heaven?"<sup>1</sup> To this he replies in the negative by refuting the arguments of his opponents, especially those in Holy Writ. The simile of the sun and the moon, the lesser light illumined by the greater, had been used by Popes St. Gregory VII. and Innocent III., Gerhoch von Reichersberg, Berengosus, Alvarus Pelagius, and others, to denote the relation between the Empire and the Papacy. Against this interpretation Dante urges, that as the sun and moon were created on the fourth day, but man not until the sixth, "God would have used a perverted order, by producing the accidents before their substance;"<sup>2</sup> that is, figuratively, the government of mankind by Pope or Emperor before man himself existed. The sun and moon, again, were created before the Fall, and this first called into existence both Papacy and Empire. Still Dante admits that, although the moon does not derive its being from the sun, yet the flood of light which it receives therefrom adds to its brilliancy and power. "Therefore," he concludes, "the temporal power does not receive its being from the spiritual power, nor its power which is its authority, nor its working considered in itself. Yet it is good that the temporal power should receive from the spiritual the means of working more effectually by the light of grace."<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, in his Epistle to the Princes and Lords of Italy, Dante calls the Empire "the lesser light."<sup>4</sup> Next he brings forward the types of Levi, the

<sup>1</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 1.    <sup>2</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 4.    <sup>3</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Even Ockham expresses himself similarly. "In a certain sense only is the simile of the sun and moon correct. As the sun is a higher and nobler luminary than the moon, so also the Papacy, being a spiritual power, is higher and nobler than the Empire, which is temporal. And as the moon derives its light from the sun, so does the Emperor receive guidance from the Pope, if he be a good and wise Catholic; guidance, that is, in spiritual things."—*Dialog.* c. 24.

priesthood, and Juda, the kingdom, to confute the argument that because "Levi preceded Juda in his birth, therefore the Church precedes the Empire in authority."<sup>1</sup> Again, according to Dante, Saul's deposition by Samuel<sup>2</sup> cannot be cited as a precedent, because in this case Samuel acted in virtue of a divine commission. The Pope is doubtless God's Vicar, but for that very reason his jurisdiction has its appointed limits; nor can he, without God's express command, assume to himself authority which belongs to God alone. The power of binding and loosing "all" was indeed given to Peter, as the context proves,<sup>3</sup> for this refers to the keys of the kingdom of Heaven. "Yet it does not therefore follow that he can bind and loose the decrees of the Empire, that is, in temporal things."<sup>4</sup>

The obligation of the two swords to assist each other was recognised as a first principle, alike by Popes Innocent III. and Gregory IX., and by the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa, Frederic II., and Henry IV.<sup>5</sup> The early patristic doctrine,<sup>6</sup> that the Imperial power is bound to protect the Church, was reaffirmed in the sixteenth century in the treaty between the Emperor Charles V. and Pope Leo X.<sup>7</sup> According to the Guelfs, the temporal sword was given directly to the Pope, and to the Emperor through him; according to the Ghibellines, to the Emperor direct, with-

<sup>1</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings xv. 25, 28.

<sup>3</sup> "And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and, whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in Heaven."—*Matth.* xvi. 19.

<sup>4</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Walter, *Pontes*, p. 30: "And since the material sword was ordained to help the spiritual sword," &c.

<sup>6</sup> "Thou who perseveringly devotest to the care of temporal things the service of a religious foresight based on the divine and eternal order."—*Leo M. to the Emperor Leo*, Ep. 156, 157: "That thy earthly kingdom may be the guide to the kingdom of heaven."—*Gregor. M. to the Emperor Mauricius*, Ep. iii. 65.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Lanz, *Briefe und Actenstücke zur Geschichte Karl's V.*, p. 256; Bellarm. *De Rom. Pontif.* v. 5; *De Verb. Dei*, iii. 3.



out Papal intervention. In order to evade the force of the argument, as founded by Pope Boniface VIII. upon this text<sup>1</sup> of Holy Scripture, Dante altogether denies its allegorical meaning. This Bellarmine afterwards admitted, but added, that if the passage is to be understood figuratively, the preceding persecution and conflict must also be interpreted in a spiritual sense.

Again, Dante tries to weaken the proofs which his opponents alleged from history. Laurentius Valla was the first to question the authenticity of the deed of gift, by which the Emperor Constantine surrendered Rome and its kingdom to Pope Sylvester I, after having been cleansed from his leprosy through the Pontiff's intercession :

"As in Soracte, Constantine besought,  
To cure his leprosy, Sylvester's aid."

—*Hell*, xxvii. 89.

Dante does not indeed deny the fact itself, but its lawfulness.<sup>2</sup> He maintains that Constantine had no right to give up the Western Empire; for the Emperor is to maintain the unity of mankind, and therefore that division of the Empire was a dereliction of his charge. "As the Church cannot alienate the divine right on which she is founded, neither can the Empire give up its right, which is purely human. Besides, the Empire is a jurisdiction . . . prior to the judge who has it; he is only Emperor by virtue of this dignity, which not only existed before him, but is of

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvi. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Constantine transferred the Empire and its code of laws to the East. His intention was good, that of exalting the Name of Jesus (as Dante's master, Brunetto Latini, says in his *Tesoro*). Doubtless, therefore, he has not suffered for the evil consequences of his deed. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the "Donatio Constantini" had the credit of being an authentic document. Popes attested the proofs of its validity, which since Baronius' time has been considered doubtful. Its force lay, not in yellow parchments, but in the universal acquiescence of the Christian world.

superior rank." Still, granting the transaction legal on the part of the Emperor, it would never be so on the part of the Church; for the Church is altogether incapable of receiving temporal things, seeing our Lord's prohibition: "Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses."<sup>1</sup> It is, therefore, plain that the Church could neither acquire dominion by such a gift, nor Constantine lawfully make the donation; though the Emperor, as protector of the Church, could allot to her a patrimony<sup>2</sup> (*patrimonium*) and other things, if he did not thereby impair his supreme dominion, the unity of which does not allow a division. And the Vicar of Christ could receive such things, not as their independent possessor, but as a steward to dispense the fruits of them to the poor of Christ.<sup>3</sup> Thus in the Paradise the mystic Eagle declares:

"The other following, with the laws and me,  
To yield the shepherd room, pass'd o'er to Greece,  
From good intent, producing evil fruit:  
Now knoweth he, how all the ill, derived  
From his well-doing, doth not harm him aught,  
Though it have brought destruction on the world."

—*Par.* xx. 50.

And in the *Inferno* the poet exclaims:

"Ah, Constantine! to how much ill gave birth,  
Not thy conversion, but that plenteous dower,  
Which the first wealthy Father gain'd from thee."

—*Hell*, xix. 118.

In the *Purgatory*, Dante sees this despoiling of the Imperial Eagle, whose feathers are left in the mystic chariot, the type of the Church:

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 9.

<sup>2</sup> The numerous possessions of the Roman Church in Italy were called the Patrimony of St. Peter (*Patrimonium S. Petri*).

<sup>3</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 10.

"From whence before he came,  
I saw the Eagle dart into the hull  
O' the car, and leave it with his feathers lined."

—*Purg.* xxxii. 122.

According to Dante, the coronation of the Emperor Charlemagne by the Pope was no evidence of his right to confer that dignity, but was done by usurped authority. Nor, on the other hand, do the deposition of Pope Benedict V. and the restoration of Leo VIII. by Otho I. prove that "the Church is dependent on the Empire."<sup>1</sup> Dante does not even admit the argument from reason. His opponents laid down the principle that all must be governed by one, that is, by the Pope: "That all things belonging to one genus, are to be brought under one head, which is the standard and measure of all which that genus includes. And as all men belong to one genus, all must be brought under one head, as their common standard and measure. . . . And since the Pope cannot be subject to any other man, the Emperor, together with all other men, must be subject to him, as the measure and rule of all."<sup>2</sup> To this Dante objects, again, that "man" is an essential, "Pope or Emperor," on the contrary, an accidental definition; that there is one standard under which they come as "Pope and Emperor;" and that as such they stand to each other in a relation, which has its higher unity in God.

Having thus dealt with the objections of his adversaries, Dante goes on to give positive reasons for his thesis, that the authority of the Empire is not derived from that of the Church. Since the Empire existed, he says, with full power of action before the Church, the authority of the Empire cannot depend upon her.

"Christ confirms it by His birth and His death; . . . the Church confirms it in the words which Paul spoke to

<sup>1</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 12.

Festus, in the Acts of the Apostles: 'I stand at Cæsar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged,' and by the words which an angel of God spoke to Paul a little afterwards: 'Fear not, Paul, thou must be brought<sup>1</sup> before Cæsar.'"<sup>2</sup> Again, "If the Church had power to bestow authority on the Roman prince, she would have it either from God, or from herself, or from some Emperor, or from the universal consent of mankind, or at least of the majority. . . . But she held it not from any of these sources. . . . This power is not permitted by the natural law, . . . since the Church is not an effect of nature, but of God, Who said, 'Upon this rock I will build My Church;'<sup>3</sup> nor by the divine law, for the whole of the divine law is contained in the bosom of the Old or of the New Testament, and I cannot find therein that any thought or care for worldly matters was commanded, either to the early or to the latter priesthood. I find rather such care taken away from the priests of the Old Testament by the express command of God to Moses, and from the priests of the New Testament by the express command of Christ to His disciples."<sup>4</sup>

"The cause I now discern,  
Why of the heritage no portion came  
To Levi's offspring."—*Purg.* xvi. 134.

"This power the Church evidently did not receive from herself, for nothing can give what it has not. . . . But it is plain that if the Church gave to herself this power, she had it not before she gave it. . . . But, as has been already shown, she received it not from any Emperor; nor, further, from the consent of all mankind, seeing that not only all the inhabitants of Asia and Africa, but even

<sup>1</sup> *Acts of the Apostles*, xxv. 10, xxvii. 24. Cf. xxviii. 19, "I was constrained to appeal unto Cæsar."

<sup>2</sup> *Matt.* xvi. 18.

<sup>3</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 13.

<sup>4</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 14.

the greater number of Europeans, hold the thought in abhorrence." <sup>1</sup>

It follows, therefore, that the temporal power is contrary to the nature of the Church. For "the nature of the Church means the form or essence of the Church, which is nothing else than the life of Christ, as it is contained both in His sayings and in His deeds. For His life is the exemplar and ideal of the militant Church, especially of its pastors, and above all of its chief pastor, to whom it belongs to feed the sheep and lambs of Christ. . . . But Christ denied before Pilate that His rule was of this world, saying, 'My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is My kingdom not from hence.' " <sup>2</sup>

From these premisses Dante infers, that the Emperor depends immediately upon God, and that man has need of two guides—the Emperor for his temporal, and the Pope for his spiritual aid. And the Emperor, as man's temporal guide, is under the special Providence of God, Who, as He ordered the course of the heavens, and through them guides and governs all things, so does He alone choose and confirm Cæsar, who has no earthly superior over him. "Hence neither ought those who have been called Electors to have that name; rather they are to be held as heralds of the providence of God." And if they sometimes disagree, it is because "all or some of them have been blinded by their evil desires, and have not discerned the face of God's appointment." <sup>3</sup>

"It is therefore clear that the authority of temporal monarchy comes with no intermediate will from the Fountain of universal authority. . . . Yet in certain matters the Roman Prince is subject to the Roman Pontiff. For

<sup>1</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 15; *John*, xviii. 36.

<sup>3</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 16.

that happiness, which is subject to mortality, in a sense is ordered with a view to the happiness which shall not taste of death. Let, therefore, Cæsar be reverent to Peter, as the first-born son to his father, that he may be illuminated with the light of his father's grace, and so may be stronger to illuminate the world over which he has been placed by Him alone, Who is the Ruler of all things spiritual as well as temporal." <sup>1</sup>

If we turn from the arguments in the *De Monarchia*, which often seem to us strange and obscure, to the facts, it is evident that the idea of the whole book is based on error. The error, we have already shown (p. 356), lies in Dante's attempting to identify the Holy Roman Empire with that of ancient Rome, and in his overlooking the historical development of the Christian Empire of Germany, which was connected indeed with the old Roman Empire, but was in no sense its legitimate successor. How completely the new Empire was regarded by Dante's contemporaries as the creation of the Church and dependent on her, is seen by the following quotation from Gervase of Tilbury: "The Empire," he says to the Emperor Otho IV., "is not thine, but Christ's; not thine, but Peter's; it came not to thee from thyself, but from the Vicar of Christ and successor of Peter. Rome received again the name of Empire in Charlemagne's time, not by his act, but by the favour of the Pope. It was first granted to the King of the Franks by the favour of the Pope, and by his favour it now belongs to the King of the Germans, not to the Franks. The Empire does not devolve upon him to whom Germany belongs, but upon him to whom the Pope decides to commit it." <sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Dante is fully justified in rejecting the theory,<sup>3</sup> which he frequently quotes, of

<sup>1</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Otia imperialia* Dec. ii. c. 19.

<sup>3</sup> "In my opinion, when Christ came, all honour, pre-eminence, dominion, and jurisdiction were rightfully and with just cause taken

Cardinal de Segusia, Bishop of Ostia, of Augustinus Triumphus, Alvarus Pelagius, John of Salisbury, Ægidius Colonna, and a few others, and which was no less strenuously controverted by St. Thomas and Bellarmine,<sup>1</sup> viz., "that St. Peter and his successors were endowed by God with plenary powers of binding and loosing in things temporal as well as spiritual; that all temporal jurisdiction over the whole world, including even heathen princes, was conferred by Christ on Peter and his successors; that to the Popes, therefore, belongs the government of the whole world, both directly by their own spiritual jurisdiction, and indirectly by the temporal power which they intrust to kings and princes; that temporal lawgivers are merely vassals of the Church, which holds them responsible for the government of their realms, and upholds or deposes them as they succeed or fail." This view is termed the system of the Church's immediate jurisdiction. Against it Bellarmine<sup>2</sup> lays down the following propositions: 1, the Pope is not ruler of the whole world; 2, the Pope is not ruler of the whole Christian world; 3, the Pope has no direct temporal jurisdiction. The view of De Segusia finds few advocates among theologians and canonists.

Moreover, Dante is correct in maintaining that the temporal power is derived directly from God, and is absolutely independent in its own sphere. For, as he shows in the introduction to the *De Monarchia*, "As God wills the development of man, and as this again is only possible in

from the infidel, by Him Who is both supreme and infallible, and transferred to the faithful."—*Card. de Segusia, Commentar. in Decret. lib. iii. tit. 34, c. 8, n. 26.*

<sup>1</sup> "Infidelity in itself is not incompatible with dominion, for dominion finds place in the law of nations, which is the human (natural) law; whereas the distinction of faithful and infidel belongs to the (positive) divine law. It is not within the province of the Church to punish infidelity in those who have never received the faith."—*S. ii. 2. q. 12 a. 2*

<sup>2</sup> *De Rom. Pontif. v. i. 89.*

a society which presupposes a supreme authority, political power, as such, must proceed wholly from Him." Still, both the form of the government itself and the persons in whom its power is vested are the product of historic development, in which contracts agreed to and the consent of authorised representatives find place. It is precisely this important condition that Dante has overlooked. The German monarchy was elective, and therefore a dignity totally distinct from that of the Roman Emperor, which, being created by the Sovereign Pontiff, depended on his consent. Besides, as the head of the Empire had many ecclesiastical duties to perform, the supreme Pontiff claimed the right of examining the Emperor-elect before his coronation in regard to his relations to the Church and the Holy See, and of deposing him if these did not prove satisfactory. Otherwise an excommunicated person might have become lawful Emperor of Rome. Nor was the right of the Pontiff thus to interrogate the sovereign-elect ever questioned by any Emperor, from Frederic II. to Henry VII.<sup>1</sup>

Gregorovius, in our day, has raised another weighty objection to Dante's theory, and not, as it seems to us, without ground. "Dante became as warm an advocate for the absolute power of the Emperor as were, in an earlier age, the framers of the Justinian Code. With philosophic gravity he maintained, that all princes, nations, and countries belong by right to one Cæsar. Nay, more, that every living man is subject to the Roman Emperor." And addressing the princes of Italy he exclaims: "Ye drink from his springs, your ships sail on his seas, the sand on the sea-shore and the Alpine peaks are his, whilst all public and private rights are yours only by virtue of his ordinances. All that the heavens embrace is his garden, and his lake, for the sea is God's (Who gave it him), and He made it, and

<sup>1</sup> Höfler, *Kaiserthum und Papstthum*, 1862, p. 124.



His hands formed the dry land.”<sup>1</sup> “In this perfect ideal of the world-wide sway of a pacific Emperor, the germs of other Neros, Domitians, and Caracallas are necessarily hidden, ready, in the conditions of the world such as it is, to be developed into despotism.”<sup>2</sup>

And, in fact, only three years after the great poet's death, during the contest between Louis of Bavaria and Pope John XXII., Marsilius of Padua, the Emperor's physician, published his “*Defensor Pacis*.” According to him, the Pope is merely the Emperor's vicar at Rome; all priests are equal in dignity; the Episcopate is a human institution; the Pope has no jurisdiction over the Bishops, nor is he the successor of Peter, who was never in Rome; nor has he any higher authority than the other Apostles. The Church is the congregation of the people (*congregatio populi*); the selection of the clergy belongs to the civil court, which may compel priests to dispense the sacraments. Priests are simply teachers; their power of absolution is merely declaratory, not real. The prince alone has power to punish heretics and schismatics. True, the Emperor was always crowned by the Pope, yet this he did only by order of the Roman people. The prince was God's vicegerent, bound to govern according to the law which is promulgated by the commonwealth, and his offences against this law could be punished by deposition.

Marsilius thus wipes out the history of the Church for thirteen hundred years, ignores the great work of the priesthood, the Church, and the Papacy in the civilisation of

<sup>1</sup> The preamble of Henry VII.'s edict on the crime of high treason runs thus (*M. Germ. Leg.* ii. p. 554): “In order to repress the crimes of many persons, who break the bonds of that entire fidelity which they owe, and take up arms with hostile intent against the Roman Empire, on the peace of which the order of the whole world reposes; to say nothing of the precepts, not only human, but divine, which command that every human soul shall be subject to the Prince of the Romans.” &c.

<sup>2</sup> Gregorovius, *Geschichte der Stadt Rom im Mittelalter*, vi. p. 24.

Europe, and constructs out of abstract formulas a Church dependent for her very existence upon the whims of an earthly potentate. We see here the seeds of the subsequent heresies of Huss, Wickliff, and Luther, and also the principles of an intolerable absolutism under an Emperor at once pope and king, which must ultimately lead to revolution. The practical results of the new civil and ecclesiastical law were seen in the choice of Peter of Corbara as antipope, his coronation by Louis, and the condemnation of John XXII as a heretic and traitor. By these proceedings the Empire, which had received the imperial diadem from the Roman people, was dishonoured, no less than the Papacy, in the eyes of Christendom.

In order to found an absolute and universal empire, human learning, enslaved by the imperial power, destroyed the hierarchical order, and let loose the flood of democracy on the Church herself. Yet, after the lapse of only a few months, the head of the Empire was ignominiously driven out of Rome, pelted with stones, and compelled, shortly after, to sue humbly to the Pope for absolution and reconciliation. For this reformer of Church and State was always ready to renounce his theory, provided he could gain his end by other means.<sup>1</sup> Great indeed was the contrast between Dante's ideal Emperor and Louis of Bavaria, who received the imperial crown from the Roman people, and whose language, coarse manners, and habits the poet regarded with disgust.<sup>2</sup> But the scriptural argument which he had employed, to show that the Church should confine her authority to spiritual matters, was further strained by later innovators to favour the greed of the temporal power, and its spoliation of the Church. "My kingdom is not of this world," were the words spoken by our Lord before Pilate and the secular authority of the Romans. "Possess neither gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses" was

<sup>1</sup> Höfler, *loc. cit.*, p. 158.

<sup>2</sup> *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, i., ii.

given as a counsel to the Disciples on their mission.<sup>1</sup> Yet in these texts Marsilius and the heretical Mystics, the Fraticelli and Beguines, found a precept forbidding the Church to hold property. At the same time they paid no regard to such passages as the following:—"Give you them to eat;" "His disciples were gone into the city to buy meat;" "All they that believed were together, and had all things common."<sup>2</sup>

The occupation of the States of the Church and the capture of Rome by the Piedmontese were the final acts of a drama which, prolonged throughout the succeeding centuries, deprived the Church of her divinely appointed position among the kingdoms of the world. But for the sustaining Hand of Him Whose protection has never failed her, her spiritual and moral authority must have also succumbed. That his theory involved such disastrous consequences to Church and Empire, Dante could never have foreseen. Yet we are told that he was the first to promulgate the idea of the complete "separation of Church and State."<sup>3</sup> Such a thought was, as Mamiani<sup>4</sup> remarks, foreign to himself and to his age. Dante fails, indeed, as we have seen, to recognise the true relation of the Empire and the Papacy, yet he maintains, with St. Thomas, that the temporal welfare of nations is only secondary in importance, and that even the first of all earthly bless-

<sup>1</sup> *John*, xviii. 36, also quoted by Marsilius; *Math.* x. 9. Arnold of Brescia had already urged the Church, on the strength of these texts, to renounce all temporal possessions. The Church has always understood the passages as a counsel of evangelical perfection, not as a precept of universal obligation. Among the propositions of Marsilius condemned by Pope John XXII., 1327, the first is entitled, "That all the temporal possessions of the Church are under the dominion (*substant*) of the Emperor, who can dispose of them as his own."

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Mark* vi. 37; *Luke* ix. 13; *John* iv. 8, xii. 6, xiii. 29; *Acts* ii. 44, iv. 34, v. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Derichsweiler, *Das politische System Dante's*, 1872, p. 72.

<sup>4</sup> T. Mamiani, *La Politica di Dante*, in the compilation "*Il Secolo di Dante*," 1865, p. 148.

ings, unity in peace, can only be attained by a moral and religious life.<sup>1</sup> As St. Thomas says, "The temporal power is subordinate to the spiritual power, so far as God has appointed; that is, in all which relates to eternal salvation."<sup>2</sup> Thus Dante concludes his treatise on the Empire with the proposition, that it is subject in one respect to the Roman Pontiff, inasmuch as this earthly happiness is, in a certain sense, ordered with a view to our eternal felicity.<sup>3</sup> Pope Innocent III. proclaimed the same principle: "We do not intend to give sentence as to the fief, but to judge the sin."<sup>4</sup> So also Boniface VIII: "The king is subject to us in respect of his morals"<sup>5</sup> (*ratione peccati*); and Hefele remarks,<sup>6</sup> that Boniface VIII in his Bull "Ausculta fili," falsified by the crown lawyers of France, only claims a submission *ratione peccati*. According to this Bull, affairs of state, as such, are not under the Papal jurisdiction, but those only which involve sin. "This constitutes a vital difference in principle, for, even under the present changed conditions of the world, we may say, that although a Catholic king is independent as to his government *in temporalibus*, yet in respect of the sin which he may therein commit he is subject to his confessor, to whom it belongs of right to warn and rebuke the monarch, and to impose a penance for his evil deed; and this not only when the prince voluntarily accuses

<sup>1</sup> Thom. *De Regim. Princip.* i. 14. "Unitas pacis." Cf. *De Monarch.* iii. 16: "That life may pass in freedom and with peace."

<sup>2</sup> Thom. *ib.* ii. *Disk.* 44, q. 42, a. 3.

<sup>3</sup> "Yet the truth of this latter question must not be received so narrowly as to deny that in certain matters the Roman Prince is subject to the Roman Pontiff. For that happiness, which is subject to mortality, is in a sense ordered with a view to the happiness which shall not taste of death."—*De Mon.* iii. 16. Also Thom. *De Regim. Princip.* i. 14, 15.

<sup>4</sup> *Decret. Gregor.* lib. ii. tit. i. c. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Du Puy, *Histoire de differ. de Bonif.*, 1655, p. 72. "The supreme Pontiff has cognisance of all temporal matters, and can pronounce judgment on them as to their moral character (*ratione peccati*), as both the Cardinal Bishop of Porto and Boniface VIII. himself declared in the Consistory of A.D. 1302."

<sup>6</sup> Hefele, C. G. vi. p. 298.

himself, but also when the affair is notorious. Now, throughout the Middle Ages the Pope considered himself to be the spiritual director of Catholic princes." And in our day, through the Episcopate and the Confessors, who receive from him ecclesiastical jurisdiction and instruction in its use, the Pope still exercises spiritual power *in spiritualibus* over Catholic princes. The following prediction of a modern author as to the issue of the present conflict between Church and State would have been a truth accepted by all in Dante's age, and in a far higher sense. "If I am not altogether mistaken," says Baumann,<sup>1</sup> "with Catholics and Protestants alike the view prevails, that the contest between the Church and the State is really grounded on two distinct and mutually exclusive ideas; the one which has for its end the 'hereafter,' the other limited to the 'here.' And this comes from the diffusion, since Hegel's time, of the belief that moral perfection can be realised in the state.<sup>2</sup> If the battle be fought on these lines, then the triumph of the Church is assured; for, under one form or another, the religious and supernatural view will always maintain its supremacy over mankind."

Dante, though he regards the Emperor as the ideal of morality, justice, and charity, yet places the Sovereign Pontiff at his side, as his teacher and guide in the supernatural life, which, including, as it does, the natural order, invests it with light and force. Nor is the poet inconsistent in this. "According to Dante," says Scartazzini,<sup>3</sup> "the relations of the State to the Church are those of the earthly to the heavenly, the temporal to the eternal, reason to revelation. But the question suggests itself, does not

<sup>1</sup> *Die Staatslehre des heiligen Thomas*, 1873, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> According to Hegel, the state is "the realisation of the moral ideal, the moral spirit, as the manifest will, clear to itself, which knows itself and accomplishes that which it knows, and to the full extent of its knowledge."

<sup>3</sup> *Dante Alighieri, seine Zeit, sein Leben, und seine Werke*, 1879, p. 310.

Dante here prove the very opposite of his own argument ? He wishes to show that the State, being endowed with privileges equal to those of the Church, cannot therefore depend on her. But surely, if their relations be indeed that of the temporal to the eternal, of the earthly to the heavenly, the State must evidently be subordinate to the Church. This difficulty the poet has not wholly overlooked. But he can only escape from it by abandoning, in a measure, the principles for which he so earnestly contends. Thus, in his concluding assertion that the Emperor is in one respect subject to the Pope, we see an inconsistency which opens the door to the Papal pretensions and influence." We do not think this holds ; for Dante's political theory is based on the Christian system, in which the power of the lawgiver is not, as a rule, absolute, but limited by circumstances, national spirit, and customs. It is religion, therefore, and pre-eminently the Christian religion, which, as the highest expression of morality, gives to law the character of Right. Thus every commonwealth must depend morally upon the religious convictions of its citizens, which comes to the same thing as the right of the Church *ratione peccati* to judge the State, although the latter is in temporal matters independent and supreme. But as Dante in his *De Monarchia* is not blind to the higher order of life, which is founded upon revealed truth and supernatural charity, ever developed and nurtured by the Church, he is able to give a religious consecration to the monarch, and to teach his subjects that they owe him obedience on deeper grounds and for higher aims.

Therefore he places King David before us as a pattern of humility in his reverence for the Ark of the Covenant, which merited for him, in the sight of God, higher honour than his royal dignity :

" Preceding the blest vessel, onward came  
With light dance leaping, girt in humble guise,

Israel's sweet harper : in that hap he seem'd  
Less, and yet more, than kingly."—*Purg.* x. 58.

Only in harmony with the Church was Justinian to reign ; hence he could not govern the realm, nor frame his code of laws, a divinely appointed task, until he had professed the true faith and was in communion with Pope Agapetus : <sup>1</sup>

"Soon as my feet  
Were to the Church reclaim'd, to my great task,  
By inspiration of God's grace impell'd,  
I gave me wholly ; and consign'd mine arms  
To Belisarius."—*Par.* vi. 21.

In the *Paradise*, the golden Eagle, as the symbol of Imperial greatness, repeatedly declares that the Emperor must submit his will to the Divine Will, as made known in revelation, and interpreted for us by the Sovereign Pontiff :

"None ever hath ascended to this realm,  
Who hath not a believer been in Christ,  
Either before or after the blest Limbs  
Were nail'd upon the wood."—*Par.* xix. 101.

Finally, Virgil, the poet of the Empire, constantly acknowledges that the province of temporal government is by no means final and complete by itself, but is destined to be the condition and preparation for a higher order. For God established peace by means of the Roman Empire, in order thus to prepare a place for His Church :

<sup>1</sup> The intriguing Empress Theodosia had helped to place the Monophysite Anthimus in the Patriarchal Chair of Constantinople. When Pope Agapetus I. A.D. 535, came to Constantinople, he refused, notwithstanding Justinian's threats, to hold intercourse with Anthimus. And in the end, Justinian was compelled by the Pope's firmness to depose and banish Anthimus. Cf. Mansi, *Collect. Conc.* viii. p. 873 *et seq.* Cf. p. 427.

"Both which, if truth be spoken, were ordain'd  
And stablish'd for the holy place, where sits  
Who to great Peter's sacred Chair succeeds."

—*Hell*, ii. 24.

This leads us on to recapitulate, in conclusion, Dante's conception of the Holy See.

The poet's idea of the Papacy is embodied in the titles of honour which he bestows upon the Pope. He is the High Priest,<sup>1</sup> the Shepherd and Guide of the flock,<sup>2</sup> the Spouse of the Church, who is his Bride,<sup>3</sup> and his chair is at Rome.<sup>4</sup> He is the Vicar of Christ,<sup>5</sup> the Head of the World,<sup>6</sup> the Father of fathers,<sup>7</sup> to whom all owe reverence, even the Emperor himself, as the first-born son to his father;<sup>8</sup> "the Chief Pontiff, Vicar of our Lord Jesus Christ and successor of Peter, to whom we owe, not indeed all that we owe to Christ, but all that we owe to Peter."<sup>9</sup> Therefore the Papacy is the highest and holiest dignity, the "robe of sovereignty;"<sup>10</sup> and to renounce the Papacy is "the great renunciation"<sup>11</sup> (*il gran rifiuto*). To the Pope is committed the power of the keys; he holds "the keys of glory"<sup>12</sup> assigned by Christ to Peter, "within whose mighty grasp our Lord did leave the keys."<sup>13</sup> To him also it belongs to feed the sheep and the lambs.<sup>14</sup>

The power of the keys is effectual in the next world and before God; and the faith which sees

"To hoise the sail,  
And follow where the Fisherman had led,"

—*Purg.* xxii. 62,

<sup>1</sup> *Hell*, xxvii. 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* xvi. 102, 104.

<sup>3</sup> *Hell*, xix. 58; *Purg.* xxiv. 23.

<sup>4</sup> *Letter to the Italian Cardinals*, conclusion.

<sup>5</sup> *Purg.* xx. 86; *Par.* xxv. 16.

<sup>6</sup> *Purg.* viii. 131.

<sup>7</sup> *Letter to Emperor Henry VII.*, n. 7.

<sup>8</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 16.

<sup>9</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 3.

<sup>10</sup> *Purg.* xix. 102.

<sup>11</sup> *Hell*, iii. 56; *Hell*, xxvii. 100; *Par.* xxx. 143.

<sup>12</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 1: "Who truly has the keys of the kingdom of heaven."

<sup>13</sup> *Par.* xxiii. 134, xxiv. 34.

<sup>14</sup> *Par.* v. 77.



—that is, the Roman Pontiff,—is the faith of the Catholic Church. He is the Standard of the truth, and the Roman flock is the true flock, because union with Rome is the test of Catholicity;<sup>1</sup> in this Church alone is salvation, and its centre is

“Where Tiber’s wave grows salt.”—*Purg.* ii. 97.

In his official pronouncements, even a worldly Pope teaches truth:<sup>2</sup>

“He chews the cud, but doth not cleave the hoof.”  
—*Purg.* xvi. 102.

To the Pope also belongs plenary authority to dispense from vows, when there is a sufficient cause, to order fasts, to grant indulgences.<sup>3</sup>

As the Papal dignity is superior to all others,<sup>4</sup> those sin grievously who attack it. Although Dante repeatedly condemns to eternal torments Boniface VIII., he denounces no less severely, as we have seen, Philip the Fair for outraging the Vicar of Christ. Again, to Nicholas III., whom he places in Hell for simony, he says:

“If reverence of the keys restrain’d me not,  
Which thou in happier time didst hold, I yet  
Severer speech might use.”—*Hell*, xix. 104.

<sup>1</sup> *Letter to the Italian Cardinals*, n. 2: “To Peter it was said, Feed the sacred Roman sheepfold.” Cf. Ambrose in *Ps.* xi. 4. “Where Peter is, there is the Church.”—Jerom. *adv. Rufin.* i. 4.

<sup>2</sup> The old covenant permitted the eating of clean beasts, that is, of those which have the hoof divided and chew the cud (*Levit.* xi. 3; *Deut.* xiv. 7). In a spiritual sense, St. Thomas explains that chewing the cud signifies a right understanding of Holy Scripture; the divided hoof, the discernment between good and evil; or, again, the distinction between the two natures in Christ. (*S. i.* 2. q. 102, a. 6.) The earlier commentators explain the figure to mean, the union of the two powers.

<sup>3</sup> *Par.* v. 54; *Purg.* ii. 94; *Par.* xxvii. 36.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* xix. 102.

So too in Purgatory the poet bends the knee before Pope Adrian V., who here expiates his avarice, and only rises when Adrian entreats him, urging that in Purgatory the Pope is only like other men :<sup>1</sup>

"My knees I stoop'd, and would have spoke; but he,  
Ere my beginning, by his ear perceived  
I did him reverence; and 'What cause,' said he,  
'Hath bowed thee thus?' 'Compunction,' I rejoined,  
'And inward awe of your high dignity!'  
'Up!' he exclaim'd, 'brother! upon thy feet  
Arise; err not: thy fellow-servant I,  
(Thine and all others'), of one Sovran Power.  
If thou hast ever mark'd those holy sounds  
Of Gospel truth, 'nor shall be given in marriage,'  
Thou mayest discern the reasons of my speech.'"

—*Purg.* xix. 126

Before Peter, whose faith exceeded even that of John, the beloved disciple,<sup>2</sup> Dante makes his confession of faith, whilst Beatrice thus addresses the Prince of the apostles :

"O Everlasting Light  
Of him, within whose mighty grasp our Lord  
Did leave the keys, which of this wondrous bliss  
He bare below! tent this man as thou wilt,  
With lighter probe or deep, touching the Faith,  
By the which thou didst on the billows walk.  
If he in love, in hope, and in belief,  
Be steadfast, is not hid from thee: for thou  
Hast there thy ken, where all things are beheld  
In liveliest portraiture."—*Par.* xxiv. 34.

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<sup>1</sup> In allusion to the passage in Luke xx. 35, "They that shall be accounted worthy of that world and of the resurrection from the dead, shall neither be married, nor take wives," which Pope Adrian thus expounds: That in the other world the Pope's marriage with the Church is dissolved, and he is only like other Christians.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.* xxiv. 122.

And Peter approves Dante's faith as true :

"As the master hears,  
Well pleased, and then enfoldeth in his arms  
The servant, who hath joyful tidings brought,  
And having told the errand keeps his peace ;  
Thus benediction uttering with song,  
Soon as my peace I held, compass'd me thrice  
The Apostolic radiance, whose behest  
Had oped my lips : so well their answer pleased."

—*Par.* xxiv. 144.

Again, Dante never questions the right of the Popes to hold as stewards their temporal possessions. On the contrary, he maintains that the Emperor could lawfully bestow the "patrimonium" for the protection of the Church ; that the Vicar of Christ could lawfully accept the gift, and that its misuse does not affect the legality of the transaction.<sup>1</sup> Nor does the supremacy over all Christendom which he attributes to the Emperor override the territorial rights of individual princes. That Charlemagne himself did not regard his supremacy as implying territorial dominion is clear from the terms used in dividing his kingdom ; for in the distribution of the Italian provinces he makes the express reservation, "to the boundaries of St. Peter."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *De Monarch.* iii. 13. "To say that the Church so misuses the patrimony assigned to her is very unseemly." Cf. iii. 10 : "It is true that the Emperor, as protector of the Church, could allot to the Church a patrimony and other things . . . And the Vicar of Christ could receive such things, not to possess them, but as a steward to dispense the fruits of them to the poor of Christ."

<sup>2</sup> See Pertz, *Monument. Germ. Leg.* tom. i. p. 141, n. 4. Cf. Vering, xlii. p. 226. Otho I. promised after his coronation to take steps for the restitution of the usurped patrimony of Peter, and especially reserved to the Pope the territorial supremacy over the Roman states. "In Rome I shall make no decree or ordinance without thy counsel, concerning those things which belong to the Romans . . . Let them observe due obedience to their Apostolic Lord . . . and to the officials and judges."—Pertz, tom. ii. p. 959.

For his overthrow of the Lombards, who had attacked the Pope and the States of the Church, Dante thus extols Charlemagne :

“And when the Lombard tooth, with fang impure,  
Did gore the bosom of the Holy Church,  
Under its wings, victorious Charlemain  
Sped to her rescue.”—*Par.* vi. 96.

Matilda, Margravine of Tuscany, again, who had endowed the Holy See with her vast estates, is made the object of the poet's special praise, and is chosen by him as the type of the active life.<sup>1</sup>

With all his reverence for the Papacy, Dante advocated, as we have said and for the reasons given, the separation of the spiritual and temporal power. To their separation, doubtless, was mainly due the religious and political development of the Middle Ages. Still, both Guelfs and Ghibellines admitted that the division could never be so complete as to leave nothing temporal to the spiritual, or spiritual to the temporal, since both were designed for mutual co-operation.

In conjunction with the Empire, Dante supports the aristocracy against the newly founded republican states, and blames the Popes, whose protection these latter had invoked against the oppression of feudalism and the exorbitant claims of the Emperor. He devotes an entire canto to the Florentine nobles, and contends that, during their ascendancy, commerce and the rapid acquisition of wealth had not as yet demoralised the citizens ; that the people then led simple, moral, and orderly lives, and honoured the Empire, which they now cast off :

“But ye are sick,  
And in your tetchy wantonness are blind,

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<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* xxviii. 41, xxxi. 91, xxxiii. 119.

As is the bantling, that of hunger dies,  
And drives away the nurse."—*Par.* xxx. 137.

Yet his efforts to retard the fall of the Empire were vain ; neither he nor others possessed a spell which was able to bring back its scattered elements to the unity of the Christian family. Nations and states continually broke away from the community of the *Imperium Christianitatis* ; new forms of government were instituted upon different bases ; the cities, and with them the third estate, rose into prominence, and the principle of nationalities henceforth became dominant. Two hundred years after Dante's death began the "Reformation," which completed the victory of the individual over the universal, of nationalism over Catholicism. The petty prince, however mean and despicable he might be in other respects, now assumed the absolute sovereignty of his territory. Nor did he merely seize upon those rights which Dante assigns to the Emperor alone ; he went much farther. He constituted himself the head of religion, the legislator for the conscience of his subjects ; and the Church, the freeborn Spouse of Christ, was to be the slave of worldly interests.

Let those who deem excessive the claims of Innocent III. or Boniface VIII. recall the pretensions of secular princes, subsequent to the Reformation. James I. of England did not hesitate to assert that "kings are in truth gods, for they exercise on earth a kind of divine power. All the attributes of their supreme dignity correspond to those of the divine prerogatives. God is able to create and to destroy ; He is the Lord of life and death ; body and soul obey Him. To kings belong those same powers. They can deal with their subjects as with the pieces on a chess-board, and at their pleasure make peasants either into bishops or knights. The affections of the soul and the service of the body are theirs of right. And as he is guilty of blasphemy who in the events of his life blames

the Providence of God, so in like manner do subjects incur the guilt of rebellion whenever they transgress the commands of the king's authority. . . . I make both law and gospel."<sup>1</sup> It was Philip the Fair, the antagonist and morally the murderer of Boniface VIII., who first paved the way for the absolute power of kings. The Pope vainly strove to prevent the arbitrary taxation of the Church, by which the king was supplied with means for carrying on his sanguinary wars, but the Pontiff's efforts were opposed by the French nation, which thus wilfully forfeited its freedom.

The condition of European countries became more and more degraded, until, towards the close of the last century, the climax of stagnation was reached, both in the state and in society. At length the word "humanity" was pronounced, and fell like a burning spark on the minds of men. The ideal proclaimed with enthusiasm by Lessing, Herder, and Schiller, the leaders of German literature, was that of a noble and united humanity. It taught men to look beyond the narrow confines of their own country, and to realise a community of aims and interests, higher than that of each separate nation. This cosmopolitan spirit, which especially distinguishes Schiller and Goethe, has often been censured; yet it was only the inevitable reaction of minds, hitherto isolated from each other and restricted to the narrowest limits, now suddenly inspired with nobler views of life. This attempt to revive the notion of one great family of nations, although by different means and upon other principles, shows that the Imperial ideal of the Middle Ages corresponded to man's highest aspirations.

<sup>1</sup> Hüfler, *ad loc.* p. 203. Cf. J. Forster, *Essays*, 1858, i. 227. According to the English code of law, the king is "Pontifex maximus summus regni custos, ultimus regni hæres omnipræsens, omnipotens et infallibilis."—Schubert, *Handbuch der allgem. Staatenkunde*, i. 2, p. 549.

But the weakness of the Humanitarian theory was, that it offered man a mere abstraction, destitute alike of sound basis or definite aim. It had not, nor could ever have, a place in history, and could never, therefore, requicken public life.

The Empire has fallen. Yet it only represented the earthly and transitory side of the great commonwealth of nations. In its spiritual and immortal life the human family still remains united, and exhibits a vitality new and astounding in the midst of a decaying world. The bond of this union is the Catholic Church, with her centre, the Sovereign Pontiff. The Roman Empire was his creation. His consecration alone gave it that place and authority, which the nations of Europe regarded with awe. The Church saw the Empire born and die, and stood by it in its cradle and its grave.

Many a sceptre may yet be broken, many a crown lost; but the visible and divine kingdom of the Catholic Church lives on, and will endure unto the end. Not in vain has the blood of Christ and His Vicars been shed for her :

“ But for the purchase of this happy life,  
Did Sixtus, Pius, and Callistus bleed,  
And Urban.”—*Par.* xxvii. 39.

The finger of God has touched her. His Spirit renders her incorruptible. Wearied with the tumults of the world and the conflicts of the hour, to the Church we turn as to our true home. From her perpetual and life-giving streams, we draw a strength divine. And when all else is shaken, and the very groundwork of society threatens to give way, our feet stand secure, for the Church is built on “a Rock of diamond.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* ix. 95.

“ Non fu la Sposa di Cristo allevata  
Del sangue mio, di Lin, di quel di Cleto,  
Per essere ad acquisto d'oro usata :  
Ma per acquisto d'esto viver lieto  
E Sisto e Pio Calisto ed Urbano  
Sparser lo sangue dopo molto fieto.”

—*Pur.* xxvii. 40.





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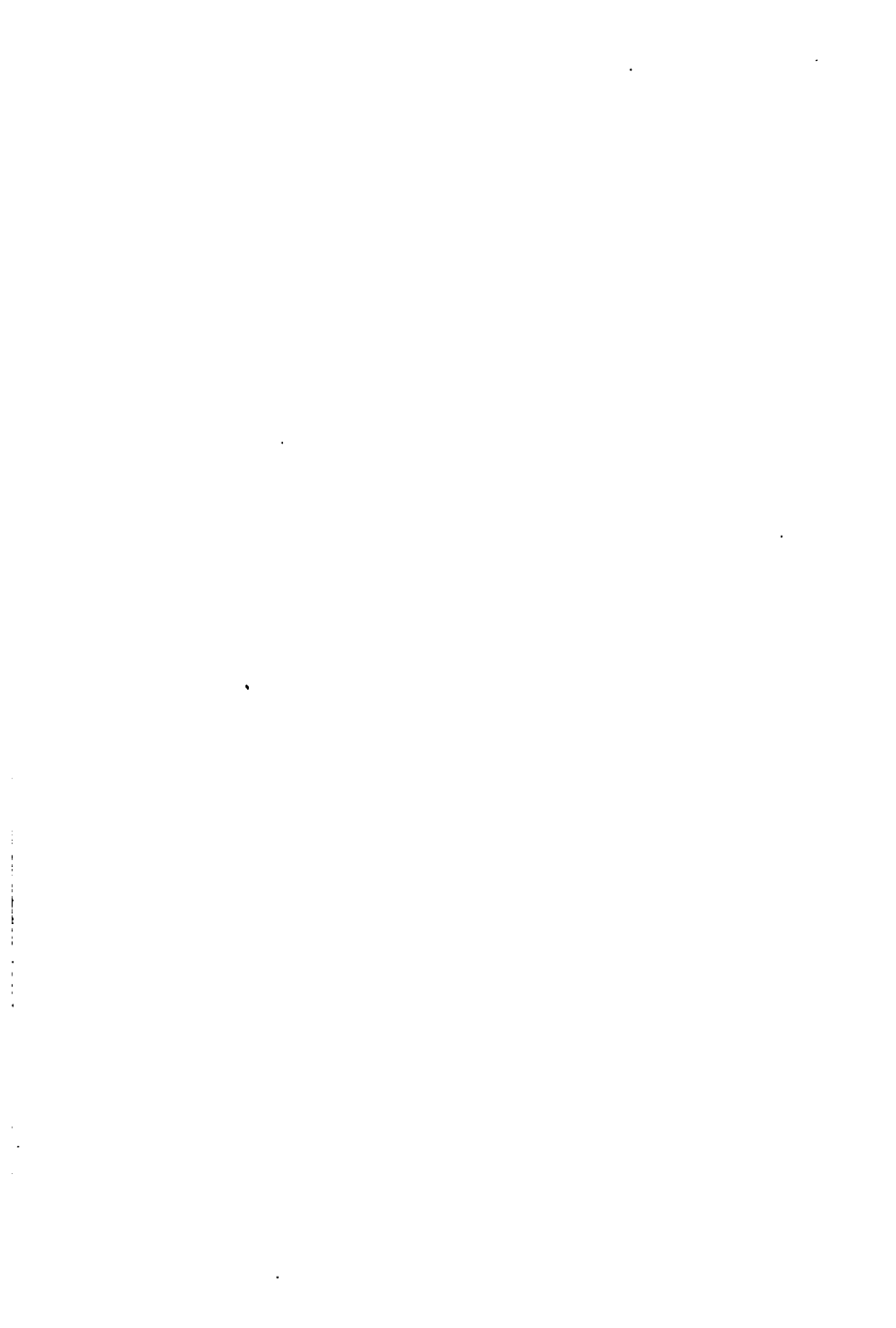
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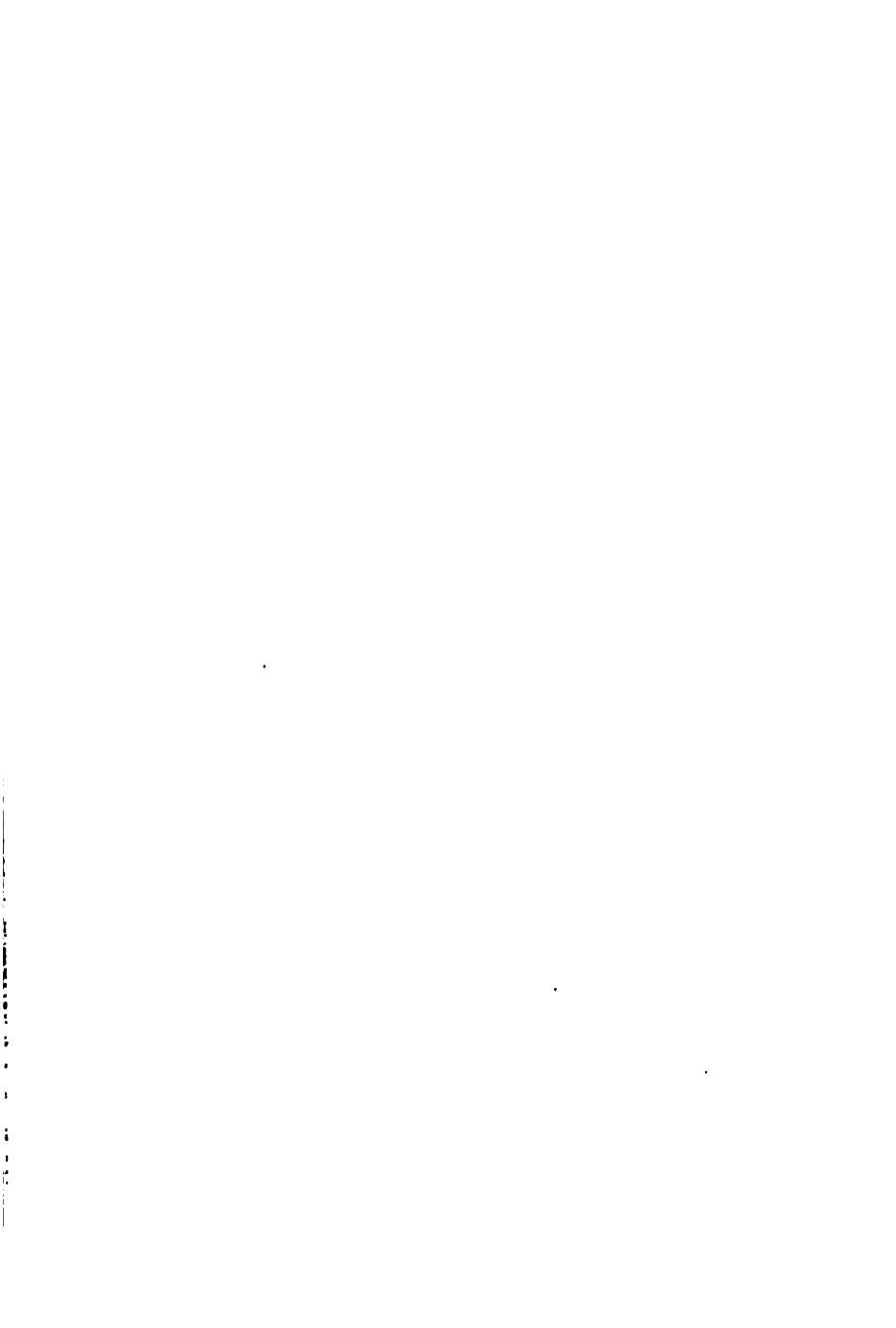
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